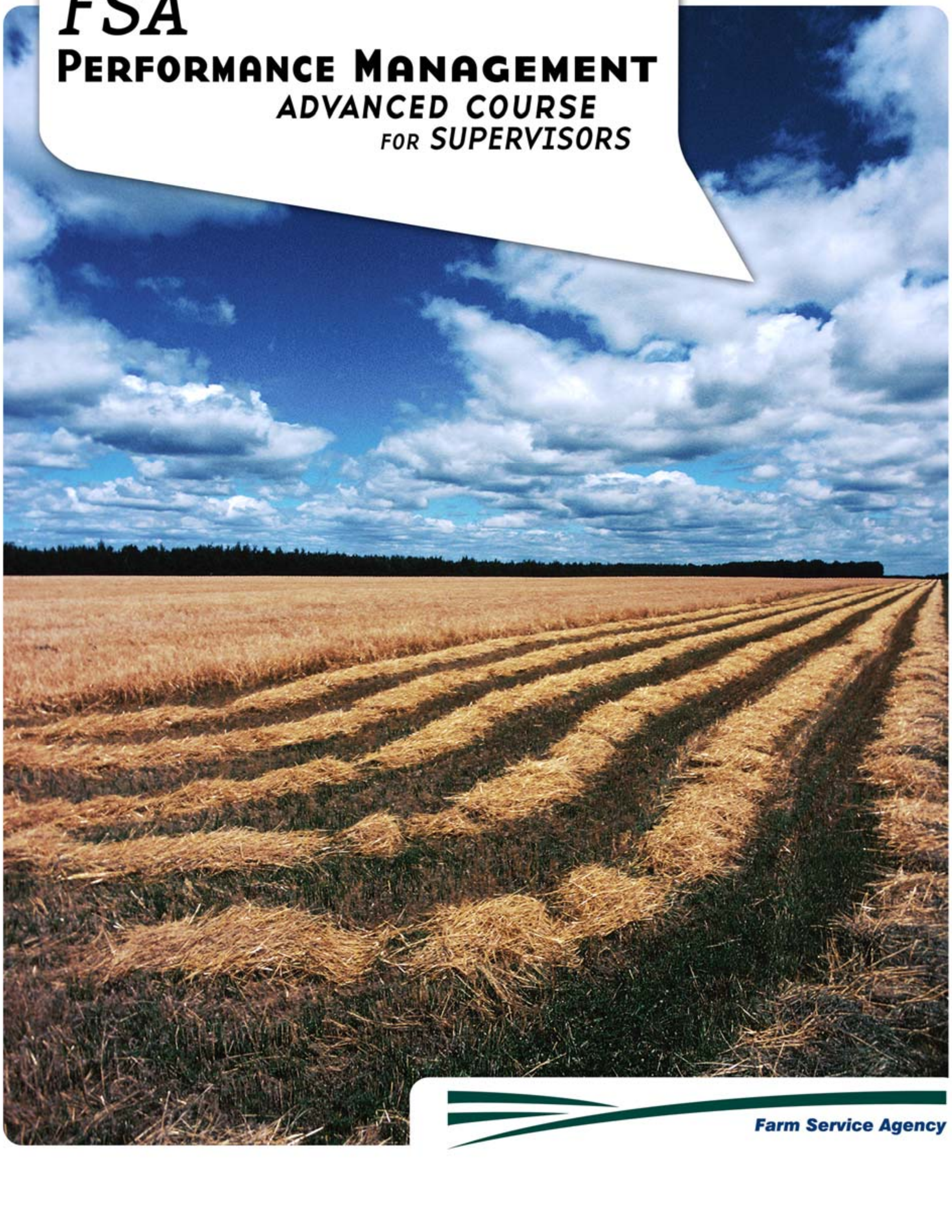
FSA
Performance Management
Advanced Course for Supervisors



Farm Service Agency

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Section 1: Course Overview

AUDIENCES FOR THIS DESK GUIDE

This Desk Guide is a text version of the *Performance Management Advanced Course* computer-based training (CBT). This course takes a more in depth look at issues that supervisors find most challenging.

- Prerequisite to this course is the Performance Management at Farm Service Agency for Supervisors CBT.
- This course assumes a basic understanding of the performance management process in use throughout the Agency.
- It is for all supervisors and managers in the Farm Service Agency.

OVERVIEW

This course is organized around the five phases of the performance management cycle and key questions supervisors and managers have in each phase. For example:

- What is really involved in the Planning phase?
- How can I make monitoring performance work for me?
- What can I do to improve employees' performance?
- How do I rate fairly and discuss end-of-year ratings with my employees?
- In what ways can I reward my employees?

By making performance management one of your daily activities year-round, you significantly increase the chances of your employees performing successfully.

Image: Five Phases of Performance Management

- **Planning**. Plan work by setting and communicating performance expectations that align with work unit and organizational objectives. Outstanding performance management happens when individual measurable standards align with the Agency's strategic objectives. Day-to-day activities further the Agency's strategy. Otherwise, employees may work hard and do things right, but they don't do the right things.

- **Monitoring**. Continually monitor performance with ongoing feedback and progress reviews. Keep a running log of employees' performance with specifics to refer to for feedback conversations and writing a review.

- **Developing**. Develop the capacity of employees who work for you by:

  – Addressing poor performance
  – Improving good performance
  – Training and delegating assignments that introduce new skills or higher levels of responsibilities.

- **Rating**. At the end of the rating cycle, you will rate each element and provide a summary rating.

- **Rewarding**. Reward good performance regularly, using different types of rewards.

WHY PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT?

Effective performance management is a worthy investment. Sure, it takes time and energy; however, effective performance management supports you as a supervisor.

When done well, performance management:

- Produces the **performance you want** from employees
- Justifies your **personnel decisions**
- Achieves **Agency results**.

Performance You Want

You will generate results from employees by:

- **Communicating and measuring goals and objectives.** Research shows that effectively communicating measurable goals consistently generates the desired performance.

- **Encouraging individual performance improvement.** If your employees don't know how they're doing, then they won't improve. Good performance management points out areas for improvement.

- **Motivating outstanding performance.** The appraisal process defines outstanding performance and allows employees to demonstrate that they are outstanding.

Personnel Decisions

Performance management can support your justifications for personnel decisions by:

- **Enabling you to counsel poor performance.** Discussing the performance plan and measurable standards at the beginning of the appraisal year identifies where coaching is needed and sets the stage for discussing the employee's performance shortfalls.

- **Providing legal defense for personnel decisions.** Decisions about termination, promotion, and transfer can be challenged. You must demonstrate that your decision was based on the individual's performance, not on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. Documenting measurable standards and keeping a performance log during the Monitoring phase greatly aid legal defense.

Achieve Agency Results

Achieve Agency results with effective performance management by:

- **Improving overall organizational performance.** Through the process, you can communicate performance expectations and assess exactly how well each person is doing. Best practices show that when employees understand performance expectations, they can better perform to support mission results.

- **Determine training and development needs.** Having performance appraisal data helps training and development professionals make good decisions about where FSA should concentrate training efforts.

MAKING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT WORK

Performance management should not be a burden. Even though you are busy, with little time to manage employee performance, performance management can work for you.

Most supervisors find that the following are their biggest challenges:

1. At the beginning of the year, determining employee goals and how to measure them

2. At the end of the year, deciding employee ratings and communicating them with rationales.

The following practices can make performance management work for you.

- **Plan jointly** with your employee.
- **Write measurable standards** at the fully successful level.
- **Discuss your expectations** (the measurable standards) with each employee.
- **Keep a performance log** for each employee.

You will learn more about these practices in this course.

Plan Jointly

Writing a performance plan for each employee can be draining. If you involve employees in selecting and defining their measurable standards, not only do you reduce your work load, but employees also “own” the standards. Employees often don’t have a choice about “what” they must do, but including them in defining “how” and “how well” the work is to be done improves morale and productivity.

Write Measurable Standards

Standards exist so employees have specific, objective information about what is expected as they execute their duties.

- **Specific, objective** standards are clearly written, free from ambiguities/biases/personal feelings or opinions. Finite measures specify the difference between satisfactory work and less-than-satisfactory work.

- **Observable.** If written standards and measures are observable, then you can easily monitor performance to decide whether the standard has been met. Outcomes should measure quality, quantity, timeliness, and/or cost-effectiveness.

- **Written to the Fully Successful level.** Measurable standards should reflect the required level of performance and expected results for the job. A fully experienced and competent employee will consistently meet performance standards for the job, given circumstances within his or her control. Measures must be written in a way so employees can exceed the satisfactory level. Ranges can be used in numeric measures to do that.

Discuss your expectations

At the beginning of the performance cycle during the Planning phase, meet with each employee and come to a mutual understanding on the person’s job responsibilities, critical and noncritical elements, and the standards by which satisfactory, superior, and unsatisfactory performance will be judged.

Keep a performance log

A performance log is a folder, notebook, calendar, etc., for your observations. It is a written, informal record on each employee’s performance throughout the year. What’s important is to record examples of good and not-so-good performance all year. The log is a comprehensive record with objective data you can use when you meet with your employee or try to rate performance.

Record events consistently throughout the year. For each event, note the date, time of day, and specific, objective behavior. For example, instead of writing "answered the phone rudely," use: "gave no greeting, said 'he's not here,' gave no further information, and didn't ask if she could take a message."

ROLES IN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Employees, rating officials, and reviewing officials all have key responsibilities in the performance management process.

In the performance management cycle, everyone is accountable for success.

- Every employee is accountable for his or her own performance.
- The rating official is accountable for managing the performance of all employees in a work unit.
- The reviewing official is accountable for ensuring ratings are consistent and fair within and across work units.

For more information on which reviewing official is responsible, refer to the Policy for Determining the Rating and Reviewing Officials job aid in Appendix B.

Employees

Employees are responsible for:

- Providing input when developing performance plans
- Checking their understanding of expectations and how performance relates to the mission of the organization, and requesting clarification if necessary
- Communicating with supervisors during rating cycles
- Taking responsibility to continuously improve performance, support team endeavors, develop professionally, and perform at their full potential
- Providing input on accomplishments
- Helping to identify training needs to enhance performance

- Identifying work problems and cooperating with rating officials to resolve them
- Seeking performance feedback from their rating official and internal and external customers as appropriate.

Rating officials

Rating officials (i.e., supervisors) are responsible for:

- Engaging the employee in the process of establishing and documenting performance plans
- Providing a written copy of the plan at the beginning of each appraisal period (or no later than 30 days after the beginning of each appraisal period or assignment of an employee to a position) and when plans are revised during the appraisal period
- Explaining the alignment between work-unit outputs, employees' duties, and agency goals
- Ensuring that each employee's performance appraisal plan has at least one critical element that is aligned to the mission, goals, and outcomes of FSA and USDA
- Providing informal feedback throughout the rating year
- Holding employees accountable by creating a performance culture and environment that promotes a high performing work unit
- Monitoring performance during the rating period, developing employees as needed
- Conducting/documenting at least one formal progress review for every employee in the rating year
- Completing year-end performance ratings for every employee
- Finalizing performance plans
- Fostering and rewarding excellent performance and addressing poor performance.

Reviewing officials

Reviewing officials (i.e., next higher level supervisors) are responsible for:

- Managing individual and organizational performance by creating a work culture and environment that promotes a high-performing work unit
- Reviewing employees' performance standards submitted by supervisors to ensure work-unit consistency
- Reviewing and approving employees' performance plans
- Approving year-end ratings before supervisors (rating officials) communicate the ratings
- Resolving disagreements between the rating officials and employees - in all discussions, the reviewing official makes the final decision
- Ensuring that rating officials carry out their performance management responsibilities and assessing the rating official's performance in fulfilling these responsibilities
- Implementing the principles, policies, procedures, and requirements of the program within their span of control.

KEY POINTS

- The course is organized around the five phases of the performance management cycle and key questions supervisors and managers have in each phase.

- When done well, performance management:
  - Produces the performance you want from employees
  - Justifies your personnel decisions
  - Achieves Agency results.

- The following practices can make performance management work for you.
  - Plan jointly with your employee.
  - Write measurable standards at the fully successful level.
  - Discuss your expectations (the measurable standards) with each employee.
  - Keep a performance log for each employee.

- Employees, rating officials, and reviewing officials all have key responsibilities in the performance management process.

TRANSITION

Now that you have the big picture, let's drill down to the specifics of the Planning Phase in Section 2.

Section 2: The Planning Phase

INTRODUCTION

In the Planning phase, the supervisor and employee set and communicate performance expectations that align with work-unit and FSA strategic goals.

This section examines the key areas in a successful Planning phase:

- Aligning employee performance elements and measurable standards with Agency goals.
- Writing credible balanced measurable standards guides you in writing credible balanced Measurable Standards.
- Communicating which gives tips for communicating performance expectations.

CASCADING ALIGNMENT

The Federal Government requires agencies to identify, measure, and report annually on the results of their efforts to continuously improve program performance. To that end, the FSA Strategic Plan identifies key **strategic goals** and objectives to achieve **FSA's mission**. Program performance is measured against these annually.

Each work unit must demonstrate how it supports FSA's strategic goals and objectives. Goals and objectives at each Agency level must be aligned with the goals and objectives of the next level.

Strategic Goals

FSA has three key strategic goals and five crosscutting management objectives that support those goals:

Goal 1: Supporting Productive Farms and Ranches
Goal 2: Supporting a Secure and Affordable Food and Fiber Supply
Goal 3: Conserving Natural Resources and Enhancing the Environment

Objective 1: Ensuring Civil Rights
Objective 2: Strategically Managing Human Capital
Objective 3: Improving Strategic Accountability

Objective 4: Improving Business Process Effectiveness
Objective 5: Improving Stakeholder Satisfaction

FSA's Mission

Farm Service Agency is equitably serving all farmers, ranchers, and agricultural partners by delivering effective, efficient agricultural programs for all Americans.

What Does Cascaded Alignment Really Mean?

Cascaded alignment is a formal method for achieving alignment throughout an organization. Cascading explicitly attempts to connect strategy to operations to day-to-day activities. The result is:

- All employees can see how they support FSA's mission and strategic goals.
- All plans in a chain of authority (e.g., SES, manager, supervisor, and employee) align with the same FSA goals or objectives.

Refer to the FSA Strategic Goals Aligned with USDA Strategic Goals job aid in Appendix B to look up the likely alignment for your area.

NOTE: *If a particular employee's job assignment suggests a goal different from what is listed, you may align to the most appropriate goal as long as your supervisory plan also aligns with that goal. The key is for performance plans at all levels to align with agency goals and each other.*

The cascade is from USDA strategy to FSA strategy to executive management down to supervisor and employee elements.

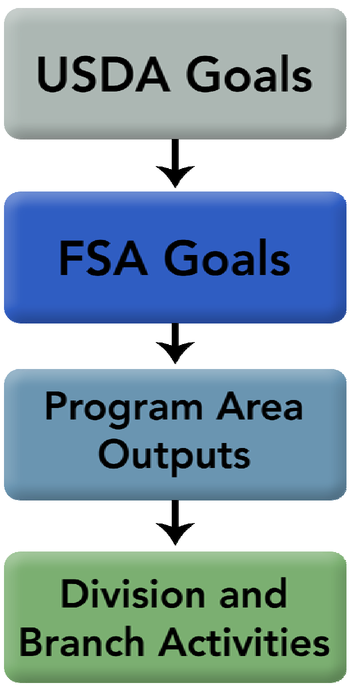
Going from USDA's goals down through FSA's strategic goals to program and work-unit goals ensures that the goals align throughout the Agency.

How Do Functional Areas Align With FSA Goals?

Each major program area (e.g., Farm Programs, Farm Loan Programs, Field Operations, and Commodity Operations) supports specific FSA goals. In turn, each staff, division, or state office within a program supports the program's goals. Similarly, each branch, unit, or county supports staff, division, and/or state office goals.

This alignment also holds true for management support functions and program offices. For example, divisions and branches within Management support FSA's cross-cutting management objectives. These cross-cutting objectives align with similar objectives in the USDA Strategic Plan.

For more information on how FSA Strategic Goals are supported by each functional area and division, refer to the Functional Areas/Divisions Aligned with FSA Strategic Goals job aid in Appendix B.



Each component of the image to the left describes how goals are aligned within the Agency. For example:

USDA Goal 2: Enhance the Competitiveness and Sustainability of Rural Farm Economics

Two **FSA goals** and their supporting objectives uphold this USDA goal:

FSA Goal #1: Supporting Productive Farms and Ranches

Objectives:
1.1 Improving Access to Capital
1.2 Mitigating Market Losses
1.3 Mitigating Losses from Natural Disasters

FSA Goal #2: Supporting Secure and Affordable Food and Fiber

Objectives:
2.1 Providing Adequate, Secure Storage Capacity that Maintains Quality
2.2 Improving Purchase and Delivery of Food Aid

Farm Programs supports FSA **Goals #1** and **#2**.

The **Production, Emergencies and Compliance Division** within Farm Programs supports two objectives under **Goal #1:**

1.2 Mitigating Market Losses
1.3 Mitigating Losses from Natural Disasters.

PROCESS FOR ALIGNING WITH GOALS

Best practices indicate that employees who understand how they contribute to the Agency's mission focus on outcomes instead of the process for getting there. To focus on outcomes, employees' performance plans must have **at least one critical element** aligned with an FSA strategic goal.

Because your work-unit goals must align with one or more FSA strategic goals, the performance plans for both you and your employees' must support your work unit's goals.

Here are tips for aligning at least one critical element to Agency goals:

1. Review the employee's Position Description and other **appropriate documents** to get an overall picture of the employee's responsibilities. Applicable sources for developing elements include position descriptions, work plans, organizational goals and objectives, and any other source that assigns or fixes responsibility for work.

2. Talk to the employee about the outputs he or she produces.

3. Select three to five **appropriate performance elements** from the *Menu of Recommended Elements in Appendix B* or create new ones that cover the main components of an employee's job (or assignments for the year). All FSA employees are required to have three to five elements. Supervisors and managers must either create the elements to meet the job's needs, select them from the Menu of Recommended Elements, or combine created elements with menu examples. The elements must reflect the most important aspects of the employee's work.

   The mandatory elements for supervisors are Supervision and Supervisory EEO/Civil Rights. There are no required elements for nonsupervisors.

4. Determine which elements are **critical** and **noncritical**. At least one element must be critical and one element noncritical. Critical elements are assignments or responsibilities of such importance that unacceptable performance means that the employee's overall

performance is unacceptable.

- Critical elements are the cornerstone of individual accountability in employee performance management. Since an employee may be demoted or removed for unacceptable performance in a critical element, these elements must describe work assignments and responsibilities that are within the employee's control.

- They receive twice the weight of noncritical elements in the summary rating.

- At least one element must be critical.

Noncritical elements are specific to the position but not necessarily critical to work-unit goals. At least one element must be noncritical.

5. Of the critical elements, identify which one(s) **align(**s) with FSA's strategic goals and objectives. If you know your work unit's outputs, you should be able to identify the broader FSA goals/objectives they support. The alignment often occurs under the element Execution of Duties, but may be under other elements as well. While you are required to align only one element, try to align as many elements as possible to FSA strategic goals and objectives. *Refer to the Functional Areas/Divisions Aligned with FSA Strategic Goal job Aid in Appendix B for a source for making this identification.*

For more information on how to locate the USDA goal and objective(s) that relate to the FSA goal and objective(s) you identified, refer to the Measurable Standards Aligning USDA and FSA Strategic Goals by Element job aid in Appendix B.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Answer the following questions. Refer to Appendix A for the correct answer.

Question 1

True or False? Cecile is a Budget Analyst in Programs Branch of Budget Division under the Deputy Administrator for Management. She has the Execution of Duties element in her performance plan.

Cecile's FSA strategic goal is FSA Crosscutting Management Initiative, Objective 3: Improving strategic accountability.

Question 2

True or False? Cecile is a Budget Analyst in Programs Branch of Budget Division under the Deputy Administrator for Management. She has the Execution of Duties element in her performance plan.

Cecile's USDA strategic goal is Goal #2 Enhance the Competitiveness and Sustainability of Rural Farm Economics, Objective 2.1: Expand domestic market opportunities.

KEY POINTS

In order to perform cascaded alignment:

- Review the employee's position description, any work plans, organizational goals and objectives, and any other source that assigns or fixes responsibility for accomplishment of work.
- Talk with the employee about the outputs he or she produces.
- Review the Menu of Recommended Elements job aid and select (or create) appropriate critical and noncritical elements.
- Use the Department Aligned with the FSA Strategic Goals and FSA Strategic Goals Aligned with USDA Strategic Goals job aids and locate your program and the related FSA goal and objective(s) for an employee.
- Refer to Measurable Standards Aligning USDA and FSA Strategic Goals by Element job aid to locate the USDA goal and objective(s) that relate to the FSA goal and objective(s) you identified.

All of the job aids referred to above can be found Appendix B.

WRITING MEASURABLE, RESULTS FOCUSED STANDARDS

Writing effective measurable, results focused standards can be one of a supervisor's hardest tasks.

The first step is to understand how measurable standards complement the element descriptions. Those descriptions describe the work to be performed, while measurable standards describe how well an employee is expected to perform this work at a **Fully Successful level**. This level generally describes the performance of the effective employee whose work meets normal expectations in terms of quantity, quality, timeliness, and cost-effectiveness.

Measurable standards are statements that quantify or qualify the employee's expected performance. Each element (critical and noncritical) should have **at least three** measurable standards. **Note:** As of May 2007, this is new policy language. Previous language used to cite "three to five" measurable standards per each element.

TYPES OF MEASURES

Good measurable standards give clear expectations of how well something has to be done. There are four types of measures:

- Qualitative measures
- Quantitative measures
- Timeliness measures
- Cost-effectiveness measures

To determine appropriate measures, that might be appropriate, ask yourself:

- Do customers, coworkers, or supervisors care how well the work is done? (quality)

- Do customers, coworkers, or supervisors care how many items are produced or how much time is spent on an activity? (quantity)

- Is it important to accomplish the element by a certain time or date? (time)

- Is it important to accomplish the element within certain cost limits? Are we trying to be more efficient? Is rework causing missed deadlines? (cost-effectiveness)

Measures can be **numeric** or **descriptive**, although numeric measures are most often used to collect quantitative and timeliness data. To ensure a balanced perspective, use a mix of quality, quantity, timeliness, and/or cost-effectiveness measures.

Qualitative Measures

Qualitative measures:

- Refer to the accuracy, appearance, or usefulness of the effort
- Are often expressed by adverbs (e.g., accurately, concisely, clearly, courteously, constructively); with these terms, include who makes the judgment (e.g., customers, coworkers, supervisor) or what data is used to make the determination (e.g., by customer survey, by feedback from coworkers).

Examples:

- Adheres to standards established by customers, supervisors, policy, etc. 90 to 95 percent of the time
- In compliance with specifications found in Agency policy, FSA documents, etc. with between two to four exceptions.

Quantitative Measures

Quantitative measures:

- Refer to the number of products produced, services provided, or a general result
- Are expressed in terms of numbers, percentages, frequencies (e.g., at least x phone calls per day; introduces at least one new program by end of third quarter)
- May express a percentage of a person's job that should be dedicated to a particular project (e.g., 25 percent of time for next 6 months)
- Should be written as number ranges instead of single

numbers or percentages

- May focus on the number of errors allowed per XX (e.g., not more than one error per 20 reports; no more than two exceptions in 6 months).

Examples:

- Writes three to five notices per week
- Loads software within 2 workdays of receipt with only 3-5 exceptions.
- Assembles, indexes, and organizes work papers to expedite analysis and develop quality summaries and report segments with only 1-3 revisions by supervisor 85-95 percent of the time.
- Receives no more than __ valid grievances per ___ employees.

Timeliness Measures

Timeliness measures:

- Refer to how quickly a task should be done
- Can be worded as a due date (e.g., 4/15/07; the 30th of each month) or by a span of time within which the activity should take place (e.g., within 24 hours of occurrence; within 3 days of receipt).

Examples:

- Submits reports on time by due date three out of four quarters
- Maintains cycle time of within 2 weeks
- Consistently meets deadlines with no more than __ exceptions per __

Cost-effectiveness Measures

Cost-effectiveness measures:

- Refer to cost avoidance or cost control for the Agency that can be documented and measured in annual fiscal year budgets

- May include maintaining or reducing unit costs, increasing efficiency, or reducing waste. Any time work becomes more efficient (e.g., reducing the amount of rework, revisions, or reminders; improving the clarity of directives, notices, or handbooks), it translates into cost effectiveness.

Examples:

- Maintains or reduces unit expenditures by up to 10 percent
- Stays within budgets three out of four quarters
- Reduces the time it takes to provide X service by __ (minutes, hours, days)
- Spends no more than $___ per program
- Reduces error rate (or rework) by ___ per ___
- Reduces waste by ___ per ___

Numeric Measures

Numeric measures are easy to verify, quantifiable, and objective. Numeric measures should be presented as ranges instead of exact numbers or percentages. Determine if there are numbers that could be tracked.

Examples:

- Draft copies of the Technical Loan Analysis are due to the manager 25 to 30 days before late payment fees are triggered.
- Employee participates in between four and six training sessions per year.

Descriptive Measures

Descriptive measures are nonspecific and subjective. However, they communicate general expectations. Ask yourself who could judge whether the measure was achieved. What factors would they look for?

Examples:

The Technical Loan Analysis will be complete and accurate with between two to three exceptions as verified by second-party review.

Note: *This type of measure should be used sparingly because it can be very subjective.*

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

For each measure listed, select its type (i.e., timeliness, qualitative, quantitative, or cost-effectiveness). Check Appendix A for correct answer.

Measures	Type of Measure
Program plans and guidance are responsive to objectives and requirements of the agency.	
Performs CDAT functions no less than 40 percent of job time.	
Limits personal calls, emails, and internet use to breaks and lunch hour, with no more than three exceptions per month.	
Maintains cycle time of 2 weeks.	
Reviews and edits draft correspondence and briefings to ensure correct format and grammatical usage.	

DETERMINING WHAT TO MEASURE

Before writing a measurable standard, have a clear picture of the employee's work and the results you and/or others want. For each element, identify what the employee's key tasks and outputs. Then ask yourself:

- If the employee performs at a Fully Successful level, what results do I expect? What results do others (e.g., customers, coworkers, other supervisors) expect?

- How will I (or others) know that the results have been met? Is quality, quantity, timeliness, and/or cost-effectiveness important? What are the thresholds that I will accept as Fully Successful performance?

Do I have a **method** to accurately and reasonably determine whether this measurable standard has been met at the Fully Successful level? When developing measurable standards, determine how to evaluate the quality, quantity, timeliness, and/or cost-effectiveness of the element, based on factors that are within the employee's control.

In order to verify measurable standards, get proof of how the standards were or were not met. This could include:

- Using measures that are already tracked or can easily begin to be tracked (e.g., via logs or record books)
- Gathering input from others (e.g., customers, coworkers, other supervisors) to get a complete and accurate picture of the employee’s performance.

For assistance on determining what to measure, use the Determine Measurable Standards worksheet in Appendix B.

Note: *FSA field office personnel should consider using the Measurable Standards for FSA Field Office Positions contained in Appendix B.* These standards may be used as is, revised to accurately measure what the employee does, or supplemented with other standards.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MEASURABLE STANDARDS

Well-written, measurable standards are:

- **Specific and objective.** Standards should be clearly written and free from ambiguities/biases/personal feelings or opinions. Finite measures should specify the difference between satisfactory and less-than-satisfactory work. A standard should also allow room for employees to exceed the Fully Successful level. Whenever possible, use ranges when setting numeric measures

- **Mission-related.** The standard should directly align the required performance of the job.

- **Nondiscriminatory.** The standard should be able to be consistently applied to all personnel in the same or similar position or grade with the same authority. Although the standards may be the same for similar positions, they should reflect the grade level of the employee.

- **Observable.** You must realistically be able to monitor the performance to check whether the standard has been met. Those observations should be based on measurable outcomes in terms of quality, quantity, timeliness, and/or cost-effectiveness.

- **Written to the Fully Successful level.** Measurable standards should reflect the required level of performance and expected results. A fully experienced and competent employee will consistently meet the measurable standards, given circumstances within his or her control. Therefore, measurable standards are written for the Fully Successful level. However, a supervisor must be able to verbally describe the Exceeds Fully Successful level if the employee asks. Standards should also allow room for an employee to exceed the Fully Successful level.

Example

Position: Secretary in the Disaster Assistance branch of Production, Emergencies and Compliance Division of Farm Programs

Alignment with USDA/FSA Goals:

- USDA Goal 2, Objective 2.3: Provide risk management and financial tools to farmers and ranchers.
- FSA Goal 1, Objective 1.3: Mitigate losses from natural disasters.

Performance Element: Execution of Duties

Measurable Standards:

- Updates and maintains Farm Program directives such as program handbooks and notices within 2 days after the directive's issuance, with no more than three exceptions per 100 directives

- Picks up items from supervisor's outbox at least three times per day, with no more than three exceptions per quarter.

- Completes travel arrangements and claim vouchers for supervisor within 2 days of request, with no more than two exceptions per 6 months.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Question 1

Classify each measure as effective or ineffective. Refer to Appendix A for correct answer.

Item	Effective	Ineffective
Ensures investments achieve goals.		
Prepares written documents that are clear, concise, and understandable within established timeframes, with no exceptions.		
Communicates clearly with stakeholders and shares accurate information, with no more than three exceptions.		
Responds to complex program questions.		

Question 2

Use the information for the sample employee provided below and the job aids in Appendix B to answer the following question. Refer to Appendix A for the correct answer.

Cecile is a Budget Analyst in Programs Branch of Budget Division under Administrator for Management. She has the Execution of Duties element in her performance plan.

An appropriate measurable standard for Cecile is:

A. Responds to general loan program questions within 24 hours, with no more than one exception per 2 months.
B. Completes pilot implementation of a budget and performance integration COTS solution for the FY 2008 budget review by 9/30/06; writes clear, concise pilot evaluation report with recommendations for needed

changes.

C. Oversees projects so they meet milestone and target dates and follows applicable SDLC standards and guidelines.

D. Program plans and guidance are responsive to objectives and requirements of the Agency.

KEY POINTS

Use these common tips to create effective measurable standards:

- Use a mix of types of measures (i.e., quality, quantity, timeliness, and cost-effectiveness) so that your measurable standards are balanced (e.g., not just measuring one factor).
- Use measures that that are already tracked or can easily be tracked (e.g., via logs or record books) to help you monitor employee progress during the performance period.
- Write all standards to reflect a Fully Successful level of performance.
- Write standards based on factors that are within the employee's control.

COMMUNICATING EXPECTATIONS TO EMPLOYEES

So far in the planning process, you have learned how to:

- Align at least one critical element and its measurable standards to Agency goals
- Determine the number of critical and noncritical elements required for each performance plan
- Draft measurable standards for each element.

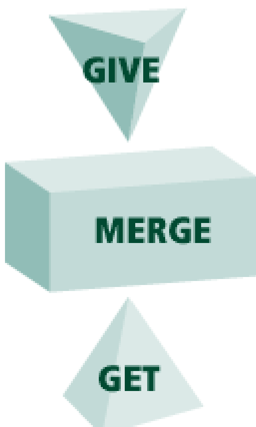
The performance plan is a valuable tool to monitor employee performance, provide feedback, hold progress reviews, and rate performance, but only if the employee knows and understands the plan.

Involve your employees throughout the Planning phase. Collaborating with your employees on annual performance plans increases the likelihood that measurable standards will be credible and employees will meet or exceed them.

Employee involvement typically occurs during the performance planning meeting, if not before. Remember that this is not best practice, but a minimal requirement.

STEPS FOR CONDUCTING PLANNING MEETING

In the planning meeting, communicate performance expectations with employees. Discuss your performance expectations for the year. Include critical and noncritical elements, what fully successful performance looks like and how to exceed it, and measures for the measurable standards. Communication should go both ways, as your employee's input is a critical part of the Planning phase.



To achieve the most effective two-way communication, remember to use the Give, Get, Merge Communication model.

Once you've prepared for your planning meeting by reviewing the draft plan and other relevant documentation and input data, follow these steps:

1. **Open** the meeting, including setting the climate.
2. **Discuss expectations.** Use the "Give, Get, Merge" communication skills.
3. **Close** the meeting.

Refer to the Give, Get, Merge job aid in Appendix B for more information on communication skills.

Set the Climate

Before you open the Planning meeting, it is important that you set the climate. View each of the tips for setting an effective climate in which to discuss performance.

- Redirect incoming phone calls and turn off any cell phones or pagers to avoid interruptions during the meeting.
- Try to position yourself in relation to the employee so as not to suggest superiority.
- Remove any physical barriers (e.g., office equipment, computer hardware, or stacks of items) between you and

the employee. It should be clear that the employee is the focus of your attention.

- A **private** office (other than your own) or a conference room is an ideal place to hold the meeting. It should have a door that can be closed so conversations cannot be easily heard outside of the room.
- Hold the meeting in "neutral territory" and provide a comfortable environment. Let people know that you will not be available for telephone calls, questions, or conversations during the time of the meeting. Posting some type of "do not disturb" sign will also help prevent interruptions.

Open the Meeting

Your goal is to establish a relaxed, nonthreatening environment in which the employee feels secure and respected. You should:

- Consider cultural differences regarding:
  - Eye contact
  - Personal proximity
  - Nonverbal behaviors
- Establish a positive tone for the discussion by greeting the employee and welcoming him or her to the discussion.
- Review the meeting objectives. Make sure you are both clear about the general content and goals of the meeting.

Example

Supervisor: Hello, Abbie. How was your vacation? I hear Puerto Rico is great this time of year.

Abbie: We had a blast. Couldn't get the kids out of the water. Of course, it's always hard getting back to focusing on work after a vacation like that. [laughs]

Supervisor: Sounds great. Well, why don't we move over to the table and talk about planning your performance for this year? First, I want to make sure you are clear on the goals of today's meeting . . .

Discuss Expectations

This step is the heart of the Performance Planning meeting because here the supervisor discusses all the planning work with the employee. Use the Give, Get, Merge model during the discussion to ensure a productive, two-way conversation.

During this step of conducting the Planning meeting, you should:

- Discuss how your work unit goals support FSA's strategic goals and mission.

- Show your draft of the employee's performance plan and agree on critical and noncritical elements.
- Explain how critical elements align to FSA and work-unit goals and objectives.

- Review the measurable standards for each element. Point out the balance of quality, quantity, timeliness, and cost-effectiveness measures. Clarify in observable terms or examples how you will know that the employee meets your expectations for performance and behavior.

- Discuss and agree on any needed or desired areas for development.

Example

Supervisor: Let's start by looking at the big picture of how your work aligns with the Agency's goals. You can see on this draft plan *(gives the employee a copy)* that the Execution of Duties element relates to USDA goal to Increase the Efficiency of Domestic Agricultural Production and Marketing Systems. That cascades to FSA's goal to Improve Access to Capital. Take a moment to look at the draft. (pause) Do you have any thoughts about the elements I have selected?

Abbie: Well, I see Execution of Duties, Communications, Team Leadership, and Customer Service. It looks like Team Leadership is the noncritical element.

Supervisor: That's right. Team Leadership, although important, is not critical to our work-unit goals. The rest are necessary for your duties and receive twice the weight as the noncritical element. How does that sound?

Abbie: That makes sense. I understand that my primary focus is communicating with and serving my clients to meet

Agency goals. How will I be measured?

Supervisor: That's one of the things to talk about today. If you look through the draft plan, you'll see examples of measurable standards for each element that I chose. Take a moment and look them over and then let's talk about each one.
Supervisor and employee have detailed discussion of the measurable standards and types of measures to be used.

Supervisor: Looking at these measurable standards and my expectations for you, what do you need for development?
Abbie: I would like to explore some training and practice in improving my writing skills so that I meet your expectations.

Close the Meeting

To effectively close the meeting:

- Summarize what has been discussed and agreed to (or ask the employee to summarize); ask for more input.

- Confirm follow-up activities, such as providing a copy of any documentation and forwarding the plan to the reviewing official for approval.

- Express your commitment to the employee's growth and success; ensure that all the employee's concerns have been addressed.

Once the reviewing official has approved the plan, meet again with the employee so that he or she can sign form 435-A or submit it via EmpowHR, then sign the form as the rating official.

Example

Supervisor: I think that just about wraps things up, Abbie. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Abbie: No, I'm all set.

Supervisor: Good. We'll speak a bit later about learning opportunities regarding your writing. How does next Tuesday at 10 a.m. sound?

Abbie: That works for me.

Supervisor: All right then, I'll finalize this plan and get approval from the reviewing official and bring it back when we meet next Tuesday. At that meeting, we can follow up on any additional thoughts you have.

KEY POINTS

Use these tips to conduct a planning meeting:

- Eliminate any distractions (e.g., turn off or redirect phones, remove physical barriers, alert others that you are having a meeting).
- Establish a relaxed, nonthreatening environment in which the employee feels secure and respected.
- Review the meeting objectives. Make sure you are both clear about the meeting's general content and goals.
- Discuss how work-unit goals align with the Agency's goals and mission.
- Show your draft of the performance plan and discuss critical and noncritical elements, aligned elements, measurable standards, overall expectations, and development needs.
- Summarize the discussion and confirm follow-up activities.

TRANSITION

The next section takes a closer look at key areas in the Monitoring Phase.

Section 3: The Monitoring Phase

INTRODUCTION

The focus of Monitoring Phase is to monitor performance continually by providing ongoing feedback and conducting progress reviews.

This section addresses key questions that supervisors typically have in the Monitoring phase:

- How do I monitor employee performance?
- What should I document?
- Why is giving feedback so important?
- How do I hold a mid-year progress review meeting?

WHY MONITORING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IS IMPORTANT

By regularly monitoring performance, your employees will know where they stand with few surprises at the year-end review. Moreover, giving frequent feedback on how well employees are meeting performance expectations creates trust and productive relationships.

Monitoring includes:

- Observing your employees do daily tasks
- Reviewing their work outputs
- Recording your observations for each employee in a performance log
- Providing frequent feedback to reinforce what they are doing well and correct unsatisfactory performance or behavior before it becomes serious.

While FSA requires that you conduct at least one formal progress review during the year for each employee, monitoring is an ongoing process at the heart of performance management.

MONITORING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Four things to consider are:

1. **What** information to gather
2. **Who** will provide needed input
3. **How** you will get the input
4. **How often or when** you will get the input.

These same items were considered when writing measurable standards.

What Information to Gather

Throughout the year, gather logs and/or activity reports, sample work products, and special work products. If you have created measurable standards that are easily tracked and for which you already keep particular logs or record books, then your work is already half done. You may also want to gather opinions from others who are affected by the employee's work, such as customers, coworkers, or other supervisors.

Be sure to gather an adequate sample of work products for a well-rounded picture of the employee's performance. Gather information on both routine and special projects.

Who will Provide Needed Input

Much of the information will come directly from employees or established tracking systems.

Because many employees interact with coworkers, customers, or other supervisors, also include their perspectives. If the employee has Customer Service as an element, then get customer perspectives. Supervisors must get employee and customer perspectives as one measure of their performance.

How You Will Get the Input

The most effective technique for monitoring your employees' work is to observe them directly. Walk around and pay attention to what they do and how they do it.

Include employees in monitoring by encouraging them to submit work samples that support how they are meeting their elements and standards. Ask them to report regularly about their progress and accomplishments.

Get informal input from others by asking, "How are things going with this employee?" Or you can gather input more formally through a simple survey conducted over the phone, in person, or via mail or email. Ask:

- How well did this employee meet your overall expectations?
- How would you rate this employee's service, courtesy, and professionalism?
- How would you rate the timeliness of service from this

employee?

- How would you rate the quality of service from this employee?

- These questions can be answered using a 5-point rating scale such as Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, Unsatisfactory. Make sure to get respondents' explanations to any responses that were "fair" or "unsatisfactory."

How Often or When You Will Get the Input

Make sure you have a well-rounded picture of employee performance from different perspectives. How often to collect the information depends on the data you need. In some cases, gathering information monthly may be adequate. In others, you may want to gather information after key project milestones.

MONITORING IN A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

The key to working in a virtual environment is communicate, communicate, communicate!

- **Communicate goals and expectations.** A clear performance plan is especially important when supervising employees in a virtual environment. During the performance planning meeting, you may want to create norms around how you will communicate and how often.

- **Establish how you will communicate and how often.** Managing expectations about frequency of communications is vital and may need to be adjusted as time progresses and circumstances change. Certain types of communication are better suited for different types of information. **Voice mail, email, and phone conversations** enable communication in the virtual environment, yet there is still a need to balance the use of technology with **face-to-face** communication. Know when you need to meet in person and when technology, such as voice or email, can be used.

- **Set up methods to communicate progress.** Agree on requirements for the structure and timing of **progress reports** and **documentation.**

See additional tips in the Tips for Managing in a Virtual Workplace job aid in Appendix B.

Voice Mail, Email, and Phone

Voicemail: Although voice mail allows the recipient to hear the caller's tone of voice, do not give constructive feedback via voice mail because the employee cannot give his or her perspective.

Email: Email is very useful when you have many facts to convey. However, do not give constructive feedback via email because the employee cannot give his or her perspective.

Phone: If the discussion takes place via phone, pay attention to tone of voice, pauses in conversation, etc. Phone conversations are especially useful when you need to explore a complicated issue that could be misunderstood, with back-and-forth discussion to fully communicate or understand.

Face to Face

Hold face-to-face meetings with your employees when conducting performance planning, mid-year progress reviews, and year-end rating meetings. You can see and respond to visual cues that tell you if the employee understands, is confused, is frustrated, etc.

Meet face-to-face when having performance improvement discussions, especially when the feedback is particularly sensitive and may lead to an emotional reaction.

Progress Reports

Reports regularly and/or at milestones give a sense of progress and how details may affect the bigger picture. Ask your employee for regular progress reports.

Documentation

For documentation, you may need to rely on the employee for work samples and other evidence of his/her progress and achievements.

TYPES OF DOCUMENTATION

Documentation refers to ***any*** written information concerning an employee's performance or behavior. There are two types of documentation: official documentation and supervisor notes. The distinctions between the two are based on how the information is kept and what you are required to share with the employee.

Official documentation is any information used for the employee's performance review or for formal performance-based actions. Official documentation:

- Must be shared with the employee; have the employee sign the official documentation to show that he or she has reviewed it
- Is kept in a separate folder or file with the employee's name on it
- May be used in legal or adverse action disputes.

Supervisor notes are memory joggers regarding employee performance. Supervisor notes:

- Must be maintained by you and for your personal use
- Must not be shown to anyone
- Are usually kept in a notebook or calendar with information on many topics
- Must not be kept under an official system of agency records.

The Privacy Act allows you to keep personal notes, as long as the above conditions are met. Even supervisor notes, however, can be subpoenaed and are subject to disclosure in discovery before most administrative and judicial proceedings.

Keep documentation for each employee in a consistent manner (i.e., do not keep records for one employee and not another).

Official Documentation Examples

Examples of the types of information to keep in an official documentation file include:

- Information submitted by the employee about his/her performance (e.g., notes about progress toward goals, work accomplishments)
- Support for incentive awards
- Information about performance problems that recur or require formal constructive feedback
- Notes about performance discussions
- Employee logs or records of assignments
- Evaluative information collected from other supervisors
- Work products that reflect performance or behavior in both typical and atypical situations
- Photocopies of work products, including drafts with comments and edits
- Customer surveys and/or feedback.

Supervisor Notes Examples

Examples of the types of performance information to keep in your supervisor notes include:

- Notes about all your employees
- Notes describing observations, including:
  - Information related to performance (do not include judgments or inferences)
  - Brief statements that use adjectives and adverbs sparingly (e.g., Bob's report submitted on time, Brenda's presentation encouraged participation)
  - The time, date, and place
  - Typical and atypical performance indicators
  - Notes on informal positive and constructive feedback discussions
  - Isolated incidents that correspond to the performance criteria or job behaviors
  - Notes from informal discussions or meetings
  - Reminders.

WRITING EFFECTIVE DOCUMENTATION

Follow these tips for writing good documentation:

- Note the date and time.
- Identify the situation, circumstances, or results.
- Use brief, specific, and detailed statements that support

the facts.
- Include information on the impact.
- Include information that illustrates performance in relation to expectations.
- Be objective. Do not include biases or judgments.
- Include only data that reflect performance and results.

Examples of **effective documentation** are:

- Joe's report is organized into logical sections that flow together. This is a good example of a brief statement that is specific and detailed.

- This was a special assignment for Tyrone, outside his normal job duties. The documentation includes information that illustrates performance in relation to expectations.

Examples of **ineffective documentation** are:

- Toni's writing style is charming and smooth. Do not include biases or judgments. You have colored the facts with your personal preferences.

- I thought Greg handled working under pressure very well. This statement is judgmental and reflects personal beliefs.

For more information on writing effective documentation, refer to the Documenting Performance job aid in Appendix B.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Question 1

Review each of the supervisor's statements for an employee's work sample (i.e., a report). Classify each statement as effective or ineffective documentation. Refer to Appendix A for correct answer.

Item	Effective	Ineffective
Bill Hawkinson's report "Cost of Training," dated December 22, is well written and well researched.		
It is a good report.		
His writing style is similar to mine.		
The report is formatted according to Agency standards.		
He researched the costs of developing and conducting training, as well as transportation, lodging, and missed work time costs within the Agency and other government agencies.		
I think he thought through the uses of the report very well.		
The report is detailed enough to include all factors that should be considered when making training decisions.		
The report was completed on time, with only a few minor typographical errors.		
This was a special assignment for Bill, outside his normal job duties.		

THE PURPOSE OF FEEDBACK

For better or worse, employees need to know how they are doing. If you regularly monitor performance, you can give employees specific, targeted feedback.

If you do not give feedback, you cannot guarantee that employees know when they are performing well or if undesirable performance needs correcting.

The ultimate purpose of feedback is to get your employees to:

- Stop doing something that is incorrect or ineffective
- Start doing something differently
- Continue doing something they are already doing well.

TIPS FOR GIVING FEEDBACK

Feedback can be either **positive** or **constructive**. Follow these tips:

- **Give feedback often and regularly to all employees.** Feedback can be given informally or formally. Determine what is most appropriate, given the situation.

  Informal feedback is spontaneous; it happens on the spur of the moment. For example, you tell an employee after a customer phone call, "You handled that customer very calmly and professionally. Nice going!"

  Formal feedback is a scheduled and planned discussion with the employee about his or her performance. In the case of positive feedback, you might give formal recognition to the employee. Analyze the performance issue to determine its significance and impact.

- **Offer both positive and constructive feedback.** Balance your feedback. Employees need to know when they've done something well, not just when they've missed the mark.

- **Keep positive feedback separate from constructive feedback.** Saying "you did this well, but… " diminishes the impact of the positive feedback and makes the employee feel "set up."

- **Give the feedback as close to the performance as possible** so that employees can correct their behavior sooner rather than later.

- **Be descriptive and specific.** Instead of saying "Great job!" say "You had all your facts straight and presented them clearly in the meeting today."

- **Be objective by focusing on the behavior.** If you focus on behavior, the employee is less likely to think you are judging or personally attacking him or her (instead of "You're rude," say "During the meeting today, I noticed that you interrupted me several times."

- **Document the feedback.** Keep appropriate documentation about any feedback you provide.

Positive Feedback

Positive feedback is recognition or praise. It reinforces effective behavior. Catch your employees "doing something right" and let them know. Giving positive feedback will increase employee competence and confidence, along with improving work quality and morale.

Tell the employee:

1. What you liked or what is going well with his/her performance
2. Why you liked it or the impact of the employee's good performance.

You might also comment on a professional quality that the person exhibited, such as initiative, perseverance, or decisiveness.

Example: "Joan, your decision to notify the chief on the incomplete application was an excellent one (what you liked). It took initiative and foresight to make that call (professional qualities). We identified the impact of the oversight before it caused the customer a problem (impact)."

Constructive Feedback

Constructive feedback is an explanation of how performance did not meet expectations and provides the employee with steps to correct or improve performance.

Use the "SBI" (Situation, Behavior, Impact) technique for giving constructive feedback. State the:

1. Situation in which the performance or behavior occurred
2. Behavior or performance you observed or heard
3. Impact of the behavior had on you, others, and/or the Agency
4. Desired behavior or performance (or ask the employee for

suggestions about how to improve).

"When you notified the writer his material was ready (situation), you left a voice message but didn't actually speak to him (behavior). As a result, he didn't get the message because he was working from home for the whole week. Consequently, the handbook revisions were late. This will delay getting it to the field offices and could cause errors out there (impact). What steps can you take to ensure the notification doesn't fall through the cracks next time? (desired behavior)"

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Question 2

Read each item and classify it as an effective or ineffective feedback statement. Refer to Appendix A for correct answer.

Item	Effective	Ineffective
Your presentation at the meeting today took nearly twice as long as the agenda allotted, so I had to postpone some important topics. Pay more attention to the time and plan accordingly.		
I'm getting tired of your disrespect for me and the staff. See if you can manage to be on time for our next staff meeting.		
I noticed that you are rushing to get more work completed at the expense of quality. You have to maintain the quantity and the quality of your work.		
Good job!		
Your analysis of yesterday's assignment was thorough and complete. In addition, your report was clear and well organized.		

Question 3

Given the scenario below, write a positive and a constructive feedback statement. Refer to Appendix A for correct answer.

On Friday, March 9, your secretary Michelle was juggling an unusually high volume of telephone calls. During this timeframe, she completed a draft briefing, due out Monday morning. At some point, you noted that she was quick to answer each call and say, "Please hold," without giving the caller time to reply if they could or not. As a result, some key information from a director— who called while he was between flights—was not received, delaying the report.

HANDLING NEGATIVE REACTIONS TO FEEDBACK

Following the steps for effective constructive feedback will help reduce employee defensiveness. Nevertheless, employees may still have negative reactions.

Follow these suggestions for handling the most common employee reactions.

If an employee is **defensive** or **angry,** be prepared to:

- Listen to the employee's point of view ***without*** interrupting
- Keep an open mind and identify any valid points he or she brings up
- Ask for clarification if necessary.

If an employee is **feeling hurt,** be prepared to:

- Let the employee talk and listen patiently
- Reschedule the discussion if the emotional level remains intense, explaining that there will be another opportunity to talk after the employee has had time to think things over.

If an employee **becomes passive and withdraws,** be prepared to:

- Try to understand why the employee is reluctant to talk
- Encourage him or her to talk by asking open-ended questions
- Ask the employee to summarize his or her performance
- Explain the importance of his or her point of view in the performance management process.

For further information about handling an employee's negative reaction, refer to the Handling Emotional Reactions job aid in Appendix B.

MID-YEAR REVIEW MEETING

You must conduct and document at least one formal progress review per employee in the rating year during. In this review:

- Share observations and evaluate progress toward goals
- Update the measurable standards as needed, based on the employee's actual work.

Before sitting down with your employee, take time to prepare.

1. **Review documentation** you have about the employee's performance.

   You should have been keeping good documentation (e.g., work samples, logs, records, and other documentation) throughout the performance period. Now look at it to assess how the employee is performing and meeting expectations. Follow these simple guidelines:

   - Keep your observations of performance objective (focused on the behavior), not subjective
   - Have concrete examples to support your assessment
   - Don't hold the employee accountable for factors beyond his or her control; for example, changes in workload, priorities, duties, and opportunities may affect employee performance.

2. **Compare** current performance with expectations.

   Compare your observations about the employee's current performance with the measurable standards in his or her performance plan. Identify areas of success and areas of concern.

3. Assess **developmental opportunities.**

   Has the employee completed developmental opportunities that have affected performance? Determine if additional opportunities are needed, based on your concerns.

4. Help the **employee prepare** for the meeting.

   - Agree on a specific time and place for the discussion.
   - Explain the purpose of the meeting and what will be discussed.

- Make sure the employee has a copy of his or her performance plan.
- Suggest that the employee bring additional work samples that highlight his or her performance.
- Ask the employee to think about his or her areas of strength and areas for development.

STEPS FOR CONDUCTING MID-YEAR REVIEWS

With both you and your employee prepared, you are ready to have the mid-year review discussion. Follow these four steps for having a successful meeting:

1. **Open the meeting.**
   - Establish a relaxed, nonthreatening environment in which the employee feels secure and respected.
   - Hold the meeting in "neutral territory" and provide a comfortable environment.
   - Eliminate distractions, such as ringing phones, email, pagers, etc.
   - Establish a positive tone when you greet the employee and welcome him or her to the discussion.
   - Review the meeting's goal and in general what you will discuss.
2. **Discuss accomplishments and expectations.** Use the "Give, Get, Merge" communication skills.
   - Provide a general summary of the employee's performance.
   - Discuss areas of success and areas of concern, in light of expectations.
   - Suggest further developmental opportunities.
   - Note changes to the performance plan.
   - Incorporate the techniques of the Give, Get, Merge model.

3. **Close** the meeting.

- Summarize what has been discussed and agreed on; ask the employee for input.
- Confirm any followup actions.
- Express commitment to the employee's growth and success.
- Ensure that all the employee's concerns have been addressed.
- Ask the employee to sign Form 435-A, indicating that a mid-year review discussion occurred.

4. Complete **followup** activities.

A summary of the Give, Get, Merge model can be found in Appendix A.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Question 4

Read the following excerpt the mid-year conversation between Betty and her supervisor. Analyze portions of the dialogue to determine whether the statements are example of effective or ineffective statements made during the meeting. Indicate whether each statement is effective or ineffective. Refer to Appendix A for correct answer.

Transcript	Effective	Ineffective
Supervisor: . . . We'll be going over your accomplishments so far this year and checking your progress against the performance plan we agreed to during your Performance Planning meeting. If necessary, we can update your plan to accommodate any changes in your duties. Then we'll evaluate any developmental activities you've completed to date and identify any future opportunities for you. Do you have any questions about the objectives of this Mid-Year Review? **Betty:** No, that pretty much covers what I expected for this meeting.		
Supervisor: Great. Let me say right off the bat, Betty, that I know you've been working really hard. I've noticed the effort you've put into sharpening your written communication skills.		
Supervisor: Most of your work is right on target, but because you have missed several deadlines, I'd like for us to take time today to talk about time management		
Supervisor: . . . Looking at your performance over these past six months, it's apparent that oral communication is one of your strong suits. During our staff meetings you are always willing to participate and share your opinions. During the last two meetings your efforts have kept us focused on our agenda items. You also draw others into the discussion and get them to share their opinions. What are your thoughts on this? **Betty:** Yes. It just seems to me that when more people are involved in a discussion, everyone feels more committed to the issue; it's not just a few dominant people pushing their ideas. When everyone's involved, we can all take ownership of our decisions.		

Transcript	Effective	Ineffective
Supervisor: I couldn't agree more; keep it up. Analyzing your organizational skills across the board, it's obvious you are a good team worker, Betty. While this is great, I would like to share some ideas on how you might better manage your time and resources.		
Supervisor: The last deadline didn't go so well, did it? **Betty:** I'm not sure what you mean. We got the report to the Director on time.		
Supervisor: True, but the process of getting it ready was stressful for everyone. Your ability to handle due dates impacts how well other team members are able to meet them. Your analysis piece was only the first part of the team's report. Because you took extra days to finish it, the rest of the team's work was pushed back too.		
Supervisor: Other issues only added to the stress. Do you remember how difficult it was for the team to complete the project on time? **Betty:** Yes.		
Supervisor: What would have helped you finish your analysis by the original deadline?		
Betty: . . . So you found Derek Dovey's book helpful? **Supervisor:** It absolutely made a difference in my work habits. I am an enthusiastic believer in his 10 Habits of Highly Productive People. I'd be happy to let you borrow my copy. Take a look at the chapter on time management. In fact, why don't you schedule some time to read it by next Friday? We can plan to meet again then to discuss strategies you want to try and how I can support your efforts. **Betty:** Thanks for the suggestion. It sounds like that may help me prioritize my work better. Then I think I'll feel better about joining that detail in Dallas in December. **Supervisor:** Right.		
Supervisor: Let's both make a note to add information on that detail to your performance plan.		

KEY POINTS

- By regularly monitoring performance, your employees will know where they stand with few surprises at the year-end review.

- Monitoring includes:

  - Observing your employees do daily tasks
  - Reviewing their work outputs
  - Recording your observations for each employee in a performance log
  - Providing frequent feedback to reinforce what they are doing well and correct unsatisfactory performance or behavior before it becomes serious.

- Giving frequent feedback on how well employees are meeting performance expectations creates trust and productive relationships.

- Documentation refers to ***any*** written information concerning an employee's performance or behavior. There are two types of documentation: official documentation and supervisor notes.

- You must conduct and document at least one formal progress review per employee in the rating year. In this review:

  - Share observations and evaluate progress toward goals
  - Update the measurable standards as needed, based on the employee's actual work.

TRANSITION

The next section looks at key areas in the Developing phase.

Section 4: The Developing Phase

INTRODUCTION

The focus is to develop employees' capacity to do their jobs, by addressing poor performance and improving good performance.

This section addresses key questions that supervisors typically have:

- How do I analyze and resolve employee performance problems?
- How do I continuously develop my employees?

PERFORMANCE VERSUS CONDUCT

One of a supervisor's most difficult challenges is handling performance problems when they occur. Before handling these problems, you must distinguish between performance and conduct issues.

Sometimes performance and conduct issues appear together. For example, an error-prone employee may also come to work late, leave early, and not pay attention to his work. Making many errors is a performance problem. Getting to work late, leaving early, and not paying attention is misconduct.

	Examples	Methods for Handling
Performance Issues: OPM defines poor performance as the employee's failure to do the job at an acceptable level.	• Not completing work on time • Frequent errors • Incomplete work • Customer complaints of poor or rude service • Failure to update supervisor of work progress.	Performance problems are usually dealt with through coaching, training, performance improvement opportunity periods, and other work improvement efforts. In other words, you are hopeful that the employee's performance will improve over time.
Conduct Issues: OPM defines misconduct as the employee's failure to follow a workplace rule, whether written or unwritten.	• Absenteeism • Tardiness • Insubordination • Sick leave abuse • Theft • Illegal drug use.	Misconduct problems are often handled with disciplinary penalties, such as a reprimand or suspension.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

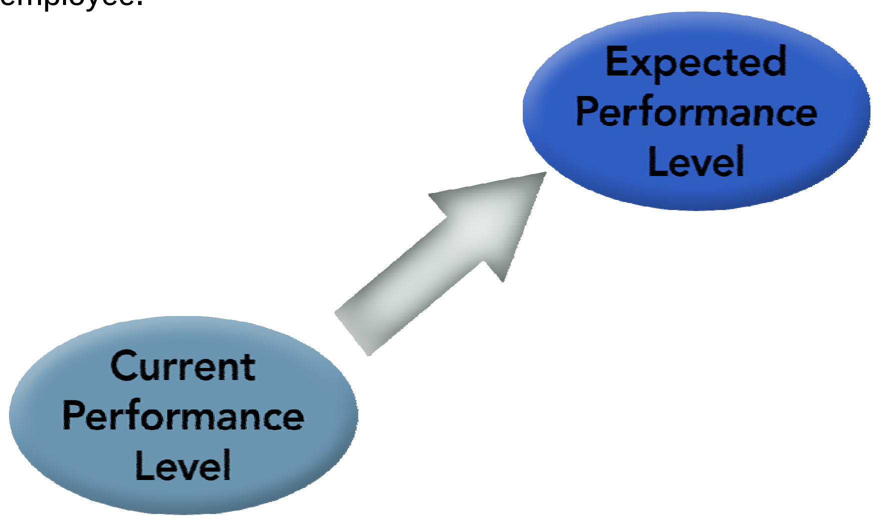
Question 1 Classify each of the following scenarios as examples of performance problems, misconduct, or a combination of both.

Scenario	Performance	Misconduct	Both
Marie has been late for work five times in the last month and was late again today. You had to ask another person to prepare documents immediately for an important meeting. This is the second time this month you've had to find someone else to do Marie's work because of her lateness.			
You supervise Chris, a newly hired Loan Specialist for a newly mandated farm loan program. One of her job responsibilities is to notify farmers of missing information on their loan applications. Lately, farmers have complained that letters from Chris are filled with errors and have a threatening tone. Very specific procedural guidelines exist for letters to farmers, and Chris has attended training on developing those letters.			
Your employee Earl spends a lot of time socializing at work. For example, you saw him chatting with a friend for over 30 minutes yesterday. He also spends at least several hours a day chatting with coworkers about non-business topics. He is usually 10 to 20 minutes late each day and takes long breaks and lunches. Because Earl recently transferred between County Offices, you are not sure that he can do every aspect of the job, although his previous performance appraisals were satisfactory.			
You have been reassigned to supervise Mario's workgroup, Accounting Clerks and Technicians. Although Mario was recently promoted, he is			

Scenario	Performance	Misconduct	Both
doing much less than expected, given his new position. As a result, you severely modified his assignment, almost back to Accounting Clerk responsibilities. You do believe, however, that with a little work, Mario can get better.			

Analyzing Performance Problems

To analyze a performance problem, you must have first communicated your performance expectations to the employee.



If you have, then the process involves three steps.

Step 1: Define the performance **problem**.
Step 2: Identify the **reasons**.
Step 3: Identify **solutions**.

For assistance in analyzing performance problems, use the Analyzing Performance Problems job aid in Appendix B.

Step 1: Define the performance problem

- Defining a performance problem involves describing the gap between what the employee does and what he or she should be doing. Describe the discrepancy in specific, objective, and measurable terms.
- Next, identify the problem to determine how much time and attention is needed to manage it.
- Assess the organizational impact so that you can tell the employee not only what is wrong, but also why the issue is important to you and the Agency (impact).

Step 2: Identify the reasons

Performance problems have many possible reasons. Investigating reasons helps you understand the person's performance, which may dictate ways to resolve the problem. Thinking through the problem will help you identify the most likely causes.

There are three major causes for performance problems:

- Skill/Knowledge: Employees don't know how to perform
- Environmental Constraints: Something or someone prevents employees from performing
- Motivaton/Attitude: Employees don't want to perform, or there are rewards or penalties that discourage them from performing.

Step 3: Identify solutions

Match the solution to the cause of the performance problem. Otherwise, the "solution" will not address the real problem, bringing about the change you want. For example, if the cause of the performance problem is lack of motivation, then sending the employee to a training class may have no impact.

Training is often used as a cure-all. However, while training typically helps performance problems caused by skill and knowledge deficiencies, it may do nothing for environmental or motivational problems.

ANALYZING PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS PRACTICE

Read the **case study** on page 4-7 about the uncooperative Program Technician. Use the Analyzing Performance Problems Job Aid to apply the steps for analyzing this problem. When you are finished, go to Appendix A for feedback.

Step 1. Define the performance problem.

- How would you define the performance discrepancy, or gap between expected and actual performance?

- What is the extent of the problem?

- What is the organizational impact?

Step 2. Identify reasons for the performance problem.

- Is there a skill/knowledge problem (i.e., employees do not know how to perform)?

- Are there environmental constraints (i.e., something or someone prevents employees from performing)?

- Is there a motivation/attitude problem (i.e., employees do not want to perform, or there are rewards or penalties that discourage them from performing)?

Step 3. Identify solutions to the problem.

- What are some solutions that address the cause(s) of the problem?

ANALYZING PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS PRACTICE CASE STUDY

CED Jeff Brown's employee Bob has been an above-average performer. However, lately, his performance and attitude have been slipping.

Another District CED complained about Bob. When Program Technicians (PTs) in her office ask Bob for help, he becomes resentful and does everything grudgingly, slowly, and poorly.

Strangely, about 6 months ago, Bob's work record was flawless. Jeff had boasted to other CEDs about how great Bob was, how his work was done quickly, accurately, with great willingness to help coworkers. Bob's work began to slip, starting with an uncooperative attitude toward PTs in other County Offices. One day, Bob told Jeff that he resented being "used" by the other County Offices when they wanted information. He felt his responsibilities were limited to his County Office and that other offices were taking advantage of him. Jeff explained that Bob should respond to other offices' requests (given his efficiency), as long as they didn't hinder Bob doing a quick, accurate job.

Other people in the office have also noticed Bob's behavior, commenting on his forgetfulness, lack of initiative, disinterest, and sensitivity to any criticism (increasing as Bob's performance deteriorates).

When Jeff gave Bob feedback about work output and quality, he appeared resentful that the subject was even raised. Two months ago, Jeff and Bob were discussed Bob's eligibility for promotion to Grade GS-7, which Jeff thought would serve as an incentive for Bob to improve his work habits. However, Bob responded with disinterest and commented, "This is a dead-end job."

Jeff thinks there is a communication problem. Bob has never said much to him, and in the past, Bob did his work well without needing explanations. Bob and his peers don't talk much now either; in a recent office reorganization, Bob's desk was moved away from the rest of the staff.

However, Bob does talk to Frank, the Farm Loan Officer whose desk is the only other one in Bob's area. In fact, every time Jeff walks by, Bob is listening to or talking with Frank. Jeff has heard that Frank is always telling somebody about his "harebrained ideas."

Anyway, that's another problem. So what can Jeff do about his uncooperative Program Technician, Bob?

HOLDING A PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT DISCUSSION

Regardless of the action you take, meet with the employee to discuss the problem. Share your analysis and ask the employee for his or her input. Together, you can identify why the problem is occurring and identify strategies for resolving it.

Follow these guidelines for a productive discussion.

1. **Plan** the discussion.
   - Conduct your performance analysis.
     - Define the problem.
     - Identify the reasons for the problem.
     - Identify possible solutions.
   - If you suspect that formal action may be required later, contact your HR Advisor.
2. **Open** the discussion.
   - Hold the discussion in a private location.
   - Establish a relaxed, non-threatening atmosphere.
   - Give the employee your undivided attention.
   - Explain the discussion's objectives and their value to the employee.
3. **Discuss** the performance problem. Use the "Give, Get, Merge" communication skills.
   - Tell the employee what the problem is and how it detracts from expected performance. Explain the impact. Ask the employee for his or her reaction; use open-ended questions and listening skills. Reach agreement about the problem.
   - Ask the employee why he/she thinks the problem is occurring. Then communicate your ideas about the possible reasons for the problem. Work toward reaching agreement on reasons for the problem.

- Ask the employee for his/her ideas for resolving the problem. Communicate your ideas about possible solutions. Agree on mutually acceptable solutions if possible. (Even if there is not agreement, the supervisor has the final say about the solution.)
- Agree on steps the employee will take and what you will provide.

4. **Close** the discussion.
   - Summarize what has been discussed and agreed upon.
   - Give the employee a chance to provide more input.
   - Express your commitment to the employee's growth and success.
   - Check that all of the employee's concerns have been addressed.

For more information on holding a performance improvement discussion, refer to the Performance Improvement Discussion job aid in Appendix B.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Question 2

Given the transcript of a performance discussion meeting, indicate whether particular aspects of the meeting are effective or ineffective.

Transcript	Effective	Ineffective
Supervisor: Sally , I noticed that you turned in the report several days beyond the 2-week timeframe with several grammar, spelling, and style mistakes. This is very unusual for your work, especially with no explanation about why it was late. There were no errors with the facts and analysis.		

Transcript	Effective	Ineffective
Supervisor: The report was late and not up to your usual standards for style and presentation. It seems that you are having a hard time with setting priorities. Is that correct? **Sally:** No. My workload has increased a lot lately, and I underestimated how long other tasks would take. I just became overwhelmed. I figured it was better to turn in an ugly but correct report than to delay it any longer.		
Supervisor: Do you have any ideas to keep this from happening in the future? **Sally:** Yes. I think it would help if I took a time management course. **Supervisor:** That is a good idea. I have noticed in the past your reports are usually turned in "just in the nick of time," although the quality is good. I also would like the chance to shuffle your workload if you are overwhelmed. Can you please let me know in the future as soon as there is a chance of this happening again?		
Supervisor: So, let's get you enrolled in a time management course. I think it would also be good to review your performance plan to ensure that this new workload is accounted for. **Sally:** I agree. Do you think we could also go over what's on my plate now, so I know how you would like it prioritized?		

ONGOING EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

Effective, ongoing employee development occurs uses Individual Development Plans (IDPs). IDPs can use professionally develop and motivate staff. By focusing on training/developmental needs, you can help employees enhance job skills and become more effective and productive.

By promoting IDPs, you send a clear message that each person's professional development is a priority. Done properly (i.e., with sincerity and follow-through), IDPs are a good motivator.

While the supervisor works with each person to build an Individual Development Plan, **employees are ultimately responsible for their professional development.**

SUPERVISOR AND EMPLOYEE ROLES IN IDP

Supervisors and employees both have roles in the employee's professional development. Below are steps you can take to create the IDP.

Supervisors

- Realistically assess employees' strengths and development needs vis-à-vis organizational requirements.
- Provide regular (e.g., annual) opportunities to discuss and plan for employees' development.
- Ensure that employees' career goals and development needs align with work-unit goals/objectives.
- Help employees identify appropriate training and development opportunities.
- Evaluate outcomes of employees' training and development efforts.

Employees

- Assess level of competence vis-à-vis the competencies, skills, and knowledge their jobs require.
- Identify professional career goals, development needs, and training/development opportunities to achieve those goals and meet those needs.
- Periodically assess progress toward reaching goals.

CREATING THE IDP

IDPs include several key elements.

- **The employee profile** includes name, position title, office, and grade.
- **Career goals** are short- and long-term, with estimated

and actual completion dates.

- **Development objectives** align with work-unit goals/objectives and each employee's development needs and objectives.

- **Training and development opportunities** include specific learning strategies with estimated and actual completion dates. Except for classroom training, there are many "no cost" and "low cost" options. After the employee has attended a training course, follow up and ensure that he or she puts the training to good use quickly. This may be a challenge since an absent employee usually returns to a full inbox. Nevertheless, it is necessary to ensure that the training has the intended benefits for both the employee and the organization.

- **Signatures** include both the supervisor's and employee's, along with the date.

Individual development plans are typically established during the planning phase and reviewed during the mid-year review to assess progress made and the validity of the IDP, given the employee's work role. While the IDP is not binding, make every effort to give the employee time for the training and developmental opportunities. Failing to make time for agreed-upon learning opportunities breeds cynicism and mistrust, undermining the IDP's motivational benefits.

The ideal IDP should:

- Leverage each employee's strengths/talents

- Provide new skills and knowledge to help the employee perform better; remedial help should be provided only if the employee has a fatal flaw that will prevents success.

Refer to the Learning Strategies job aid in Appendix B for descriptions of a variety of training and development strategies.

KEY POINTS

- To analyze a performance problem, you must have first communicated your performance expectations to the employee. If you have, then the process involves three steps.
  - Step 1: Define the performance problem.
  - Step 2: Identify the reasons.
  - Step 3: Identify solutions.
- Regardless of the action you take, meet with the employee to discuss the problem. Share your analysis and ask the employee for his or her input. Together, you can identify why the problem is occurring and identify strategies for resolving it.
- Effective, ongoing employee development occurs uses Individual Development Plans (IDPs). IDPs can use professionally develop and motivate staff. By focusing on training/developmental needs, you can help employees enhance job skills and become more effective and productive.

TRANSITION

The next section examines the Rating phase.

Section 5: The Rating Phase

INTRODUCTION

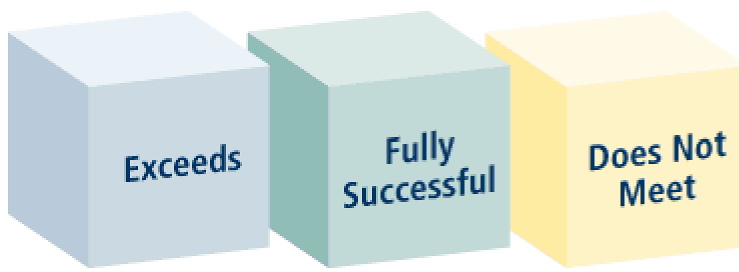
The focus is to **rate** employees on each performance-plan element, (based on the documentation you have collected), **determine** the employee's summary rating level, and **communicate** this information to employees.

This section addresses key challenges that supervisors face, including:

- Distinguishing between performance levels for an element
- Writing narrative descriptions
- Communicating year-end summary ratings

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE

Distinguishing between levels of performance for each element can sometimes be a difficult task. Objectively evaluate an employee's performance for each element when assigning element rating levels.



Use the following descriptions to help you distinguish between ratings.

Exceeds

- Performance at this level is truly rare. Few other people have ever produced results this employee produced.
- Other people talk about the high quality of this person's work.
- The employee has far exceeded all reasonable performance expectations.
- The employee has produced highly impressive results and developed uncommonly successful working relationships.

- No one would dispute that the employee is one of the most talented individuals in the organization.

Fully Successful

- The employee is doing a completely satisfactory and fully respectable job.
- The employee can be proud of the work which fully meets and sometimes exceeds expectations.
- The performance in every area is entirely competent, efficient, and constructive.
- Several areas are better than average.
- No part requires specific improvement.
- The results achieved and the employee's performance are good examples to others.

Does Not Meet

- The employee's performance is not acceptable.
- It does not meet the minimum expectations for this job.
- Corrective action is required immediately.
- Most of the employee's measurable standards were not achieved.
- The employee needs to be told what to do or how to do it repeatedly.

WRITING THE NARRATIVE

A narrative communicates specifically how the employee exceeded, met, or fell short of expectations.

No matter what the rating for **each** element, you must prepare a written narrative outlining the employee's accomplishments. Also, if an employee receives a summary rating level of "Does Not Meet," a written explanation must describe the specific areas in which the employee failed to meet a critical element. Your narrative will be the basis for that explanation, at which point, the employee must be placed on an Opportunity to Improve (OTI). Contact your Personnel office for more information.

There are “dos” and “don’ts” when writing a narrative.

Do

- Be brief and specific.
- Be objective and fact-based.
- Address the breadth, scope, and/or impact of the employee’s achievements.
- Describe accomplishments with regard to quantity, quality, timeliness, and manner of performance or other measure.
- Use language that lay reviewers will understand.

Don't

- Include statements that describe your personal beliefs or philosophies (“He’ll go far in the Agency”).
- Use subjective or vague language (“She’s a great employee”).
- Use highly technical language or jargon.

WRITING THE NARRATIVE EXAMPLE

No matter what the rating for **each** element, you must prepare a written narrative outlining the employee's accomplishments. The narrative should:

- Include examples of performance where appropriate
- Be brief and specific
- Avoid adjectives and adverbs that are not objective.

The following is an example of a well-written narrative:

Communications Narrative. Susan effectively and consistently handles frequent interactions with multiple stakeholders. She exhibits the ability to listen and communicate well, both orally and in writing. She also understands and takes into consideration diverse perspectives in order to develop effective policy guidelines. As a result, she minimizes the opportunities for disputes and conflict. In those few instances in which disagreements occurred, Susan resolved the disagreements in a manner that preserved her relationship with the stakeholders and increased their willingness to work collaboratively.

Check Your Understanding

Question 1

The following statements are part of narrative statements for Greg Kasa. Analyze each statement to determine if it is something you should or should not do when writing accomplishment narratives. Classify each statement as Do or Don't.

Statement	Do	Don't
1. Greg does a great job in this element.		
2. Greg's analyses included new data sources that were well researched and gave managers valuable perspectives and insight.		
3. Greg conducted this research and analysis in a very short time, partially without a computer.		
4. I thought Greg handled working under pressure very well.		

Preparing for Year-End Review

As with the mid-year review meeting, first prepare yourself and your employee.

1. **Review documentation.** Review all the documents and information that you used to draft the year-end summary rating. Use the Performance Rating Form AD-435.

   This review may include the following:

   - Supervisor notes and memory joggers (in print or electronic form)
   - Emails

- Sample work products
- Documentation from the performance planning meeting and/or mid-year performance review
- Input from the employee, other supervisors, customers, or coworkers
- The draft of the summary rating form.

2. **Help the employee prepare**. This ensures a productive, two-way conversation and that the employee will uphold his or her end of the performance management partnership.

   - Agree on a specific time and place for the discussion.
   - Explain the meeting's purpose and summarize the topics you plan to discuss.
   - Give the employee a copy of the draft form. Emphasize that it is a work-in-progress that you will accurately build together in the meeting and that changes can be made. Give the employee a copy of any supporting documentation you used.
   - Ask the employee to think about his or her areas of strength and areas for development and to gather work samples that support his or her performance.

   Refer to the Handling Emotional Reactions Job Aid in Appendix B.

3. **Anticipate the tone** of the meeting, to help you control it.

   If you and the employee have communicated in the performance planning and mid-year review meetings and have had positive, constructive feedback sessions, there should be no surprises in the year-end review meeting. Your best preparation is to learn from past experience how to maintain open communication with each employee; think about how to handle difficult employee reactions.

CONDUCTING YEAR-END REVIEW

Once you and your employee are prepared, you are ready to have the discussion. Holding the successful year-end meeting is very similar to holding performance planning and mid-year review meetings. The key difference for the year-end meeting is the discussion of the employee's summary rating.

These steps will ensure a successful meeting.

1. **Open the meeting.**
2. **Discuss accomplishments and expectations**. Use the "Give, Get, Merge" communication skills.
3. **Close** the meeting.

Use the Supervisor's Guide to Conducting the Year-End Performance Review Meeting job aid for guidance on conducting a year-end review meeting in Appendix B.

Open the Meeting

Your goal is to establish a relaxed, nonthreatening environment in which the employee feels secure and respected.

- Hold the meeting in "neutral territory" and provide a comfortable environment.
- Eliminate distractions, such as ringing phones, email, pagers, etc.
- Establish a positive tone when you greet the employee and welcome him or her to the discussion.
- Review the meeting's goals and in general what you will be discussing.

Discuss Accomplishments and Expectations

- Discuss how the employee's performance compares with performance-plan expectations and the resulting ratings for each element. Share supporting documentation.
- Communicate the summary rating.

Once you have determined the summary rating, you may need to take some action to help the employee improve his or her performance, for example:

- Identify developmental opportunities that will improve the employee's performance or help him or her continue to grow

Establish an OTI and counseling for the employee who has a "Does Not Meet" rating on a critical element.

Close the meeting

- Summarize the highlights of the meeting.
- Confirm agreements and next steps.
- Express commitment to the employee's development.
- Ensure that all the employee's concerns have been addressed.
- Once the reviewing official has approved the plan, meet again with the employee so he or she can sign form 435-A or submit via EmpowHR, then sign the form as the rating official.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Question 2

You were introduced to Abbie (a Management Analyst) and her supervisor, in Section 2, page 2-17 through 2-19. In that example, Abbie and her supervisor reviewed Abbie's performance elements, measurable standards, and development needs for the upcoming year. Now imagine that a year has passed and Abbie and her supervisor are meeting for the year-end review.

Read the following excerpt of the year-end conversation between Abbie and her supervisor. Analyze portions of the dialogue to determine whether the statements are example of effective or ineffective statements made during a Year-End Review meeting. Indicate whether each statement is effective or ineffective. Refer to Appendix A for correct answer and feedback.

Transcript	Effective	Ineffective
Supervisor: . . . First, let's review the year overall. By and large, Abbie, your job performance has been right on target. Your work on special projects and reports has been efficient and productive, your coaching has been successful as well, and your listening skills have improved noticeably. I'd be interested in hearing what you think went well for you this year. **Abbie:** I thought the new Handbook was done well, and we finished on time, despite losing two team members.		
Supervisor: So you're pleased with that project, and so am I. It made a big difference in how we will all work in the future. **Abbie:** Yes I am. I'm glad you have a positive view of my performance as well.		
Supervisor: Your efforts haven't gone unnoticed. When we talked at the Mid-Year Review meeting, we discussed how you could polish your interpersonal skills. If you recall, we talked about how important it was for you to come across as open and approachable to your coworkers.		
Supervisor: Your work on the project this summer showed a significant change in your behavior. By the way, did you like the Field and Headquarters personnel you met during the process?		
Supervisor: . . . Let's look at your performance in each of the elements and discuss the ratings I've assigned. . . .		
Supervisor: . . . Moving on to the Team Leadership element. I think you can improve in the way you delegate tasks and communicate with your team-members. Do you remember we talked earlier in the year about the issue of your not taking the time to answer questions and followup in a timely manner with your colleagues? **Abbie:** Yeah, I do remember that. I'm not happy that because I didn't get back to my teammates with answers negatively impacted the outcomes of projects. I can guarantee I'll be making this one of my top priorities for the next year.		

Transcript	Effective	Ineffective
Supervisor: We'll look at what development opportunities are available for you to hone your team leadership skills, especially around giving and getting information. **Abbie:** I would appreciate your guidance with that.		
Supervisor: I'm confident that you'll do better sharing information with your teammates in the future. For this performance cycle though, those lapses impact your Team Leadership rating. Do you understand why I'm giving you a Does Not Meet in this area? **Abbie:** Yes, I understand . . .		
Supervisor: . . . We both agree that the additional special projects you worked on over the course of the year really gave you a chance to practice and enhance the writing skills you identified as a development need at the beginning of the year. Future opportunities on similar special projects should definitely be part of your performance plan.		
Supervisor: As soon as we get a better idea of how many Handbooks and Notices we'll be responsible for in the coming year, let's make sure you're named as the team lead for one or two of the project cycles. This will optimize your writing ability and give you the opportunity to develop your team leadership skills. **Abbie:** I'll be looking forward to the chance to do that.		
Supervisor: You can see that based on the individual ratings for each of your four elements, on your Summary Rating is at the Fully Successful level. Does this make sense to you? **Abbie:** Yes, you've been pretty clear. I understand that I was still able to earn a Fully Successful rating for the year because I was rated "Does not meet" in the non-critical element Team Leadership, but I was rated "Exceeds" in Execution of Duties element.		

Transcript	Effective	Ineffective
Supervisor: Right. Your overall performance rating is based on a summary of the ratings for the four elements we chose this year. We have also identified development needs in terms of your information sharing skills, and some opportunities for your continuous development by making sure that you are the team lead on at least one project in the next year. What questions do you have? **Abbie:** I don't think I have any questions right now. I understand how I got the rating, and I'm clear on what my development needs are for the coming year.		

KEY POINTS

- Objectively evaluate an employee's performance for each element when assigning element rating levels. These include: Exceeds, Fully Successful, and Does Not Meet.
- A narrative communicates specifically how the employee exceeded, met, or fell short of expectations.
- No matter what the rating for each element, you must prepare a written narrative outlining the employee's accomplishments.
- The narrative should:
  - Include examples of performance where appropriate
  - Be brief and specific
  - Avoid adjectives and adverbs that are not objective.
- As with the mid-year review meeting, first prepare yourself and your employee.
- These steps will ensure a successful meeting.
  1. Open the meeting.
  2. Discuss accomplishments and expectations. Use the "Give, Get, Merge" communication skills.
  3. Close the meeting.

TRANSITION

The next section examines the Rewarding phase.

Section 6: The Rewarding Phase

INTRODUCTION

The focus of the Rewarding phase is to reward your top performing employees. Rewarding means recognizing employees, individually and as members of groups, for their performance and acknowledging their contributions to the agency's mission.

Your ability to make meaningful distinctions in employee performance is supported by the implementation of the five-level performance management system.

This module addresses key questions that supervisors typically have about the awards process, including:

- What are my responsibilities in the awards process?
- What awards can I offer to top performers?

Refer to the most recent FSA Monetary Awards policy statement for the latest and most complete information.

RESPONSIBILITIES

As a supervisor, you are responsible for using the Agency's award system as outlined in the FSA Monetary Awards Policy to recognize top performers who support organizational outcomes. To support this goal, you are responsible for:

- Reviewing employees' work and rewarding noteworthy accomplishments and contributions
- Completing an annual appraisal (Rating of Record) for each employee within 30 days of the end of the rating cycle
- Discussing with the reviewing official the nomination of employees who receive an Outstanding summary rating level for a quality step increase Quality Step Increase (QSI).

The Key Questions for Selecting Awards job aid in Appendix B provides questions to ask yourself when making awards selections.

The Deputy Administrator is responsible for approving QSI awards for Headquarters employees; the SED approves QSIs for State and County employees.

TYPES OF AWARDS

The following types of monetary awards are authorized by the Agency:

- **Superior Accomplishment Awards** are based on a one-time contribution or accomplishment to the Agency's mission or goals. All FSA employees (Federal and non-Federal) are eligible for this type of award throughout the year. They:

  - Are given based on an individual's or team's outstanding accomplishments or contributions on a short-term assignment, project, or detail.
  - Can be in the form of a Spot Award, an Extra Effort Award, or a Time-Off Award. Award amounts should be determined based on the Value of Benefits and Application of the accomplishment or contributions.
  - Require written justification that describes the accomplishments or contributions the employee performed to warrant the award regardless of the award amount.

  This type includes the:

  - **Spot Award:** A monetary award designed to grant "immediate" recognition to an individual or a team of employees for their day-to-day extra efforts and contributions. Spot Awards range from $50 to $500 and are considered small to moderate in Value of Benefits and limited to general in Application.
  - **Extra Effort Award:** A monetary award that recognizes an individual or group that makes a significant one-time contribution (e.g., special project, assignment, detail) to the Agency's mission or goals. The award amount can range from $50 to more than $10,000 depending on the Value of Benefits and

Application of the contributions to the Government.

- **Time-Off Award:** May be granted to an employee in the form of time off from work without loss of pay or charge to leave.

- **Rating Based Awards** may be given to FSA employees (Federal and non-Federal) with a summary rating level of Outstanding and Superior. Employees rated Fully Successful are not eligible.

A Rating Based Award is given based on an employee's performance accomplishments over the course of the rating cycle, such as consistent high productivity or high-quality work in relation to established performance standards. The award may be in the form of a cash award, a QSI, or a combination of cash and time off.

In compliance with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Regulations, FSA has determined that Rating Based Awards will be determined using a 3:1 ratio to "*ensure that rating based awards granted make meaningful distinctions based on levels of performance.*" An employee with an Outstanding summary rating will be granted three times the award amount than an employee with a Superior summary rating.

This type can be in the form of a:

- **Lump-sum cash:** May be given to employees with a summary rating of Outstanding or Superior and is based on performance accomplishments over the course of the rating cycle.

  An employee's lump-sum cash award may not exceed $5,000. If the award calculation exceeds this amount, the employee will be awarded the $5,000 and the excess funds will be transferred to the office's or State's Superior Accomplishment Awards funds.

  Refer to the most recent FSA Monetary Award Policy for guidance in determining cash award amounts.
- **Quality step increase (QSI):** May be used to give faster than normal Within Grade Increases (WGI) to employees at any General Schedule (GS) grade level

who received a summary rating of Outstanding and displayed high -quality performance of assigned duties and responsibilities over a period of time.

The QSI is the most prestigious rating based award that an employee can earn. FSA has established stringent criteria for QSIs in order to maintain the integrity of the award. Each Deputy Administrator/SED must establish a review panel to evaluate the QSI nominations. Refer to the most recent FSA Monetary Awards policy for additional criteria and guidance.

- **Combination of cash and time off:** Time off given in conjunction with cash enhances what otherwise would be a minimal award. FSA has developed a formula to determine the amount of time off that may be granted in conjunction with a cash award.

  Refer to the most recent FSA Monetary Awards Policy for guidance in determining cash awards amounts.

Rewards should be given based on the ***Value of Benefits and Application*** *as shown in the Monetary Awards table in Appendix B.* **Refer to the most recent FSA Monetary Awards policy for the latest and most complete information.**

There are several **informal methods** used to recognize performance.

Informal methods for rewarding employees include:

- Give positive feedback, which is a quick and easy way to informally recognize your employees.
- Say “thank you.”
- Write a note/email to your manager about the good job the employee did and share it with the employee.
- Send the employee a note/email about the good job he or she did and put it in his or her supervisor's file.
- Pass along and document positive feedback you have heard from customers or coworkers about the employee.

- Ask the employee's advice about how to improve a process.
- Give the employee a desirable assignment.
- Have lunch together to celebrate a job well done.
- Forward an interesting article to the employee with a personal note.

For all types of awards, it is important to explain to the employee why (e.g., the behavior exhibited or success achieved) and how he or she is being recognized. Regardless if the award is informal (e.g., feedback) or formal, keep documentation of the recognition.

FAIRNESS IN AWARDS

Rewards and recognition are fair when they match the quality of the performance. As employees' skills develop, their performance should also improve. Fair rewards and recognition are contingent on specific, describable behavior.

People are different; they do not all perform at the same level. Recognition does—and should—distinguish better performers from poorer ones. Better performers will receive more recognition, rewards, and interesting projects. That is fair. It would be unfair if poor performers were rewarded equally for doing less.

Remember that no matter how fair you are, employees may accuse you of favoritism. This is why objective, thorough documentation throughout the year is so important.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

The following categories provide guidance for common situations involving awards.

New employees

Supervisors have the option of prorating awards based on rating of records for employees with less than 1 year of service with FSA. Award amounts should be prorated depending on the number of months an employee has been with FSA.

Keepsakes/ Mementos

OPM regulations state that distinctions in award amounts should be based on levels of performance. Purchasing all employees a polo shirt, jacket, or lunch box is rewarding all employees - both the high performers and low performers - the same and does not make distinction based on level of performance. This practice does not meet OPM regulations.

FSA has designed a separate program to recognize employees for their dedicated service to USDA and FSA. "The Length of Service Keepsake Program," outlines the program and provides instructions on obtaining the keepsakes. Therefore, awards funds are not to be used for recognizing an employee's longevity.

Publishing awards

FSA encourages supervisors to use the various resources available to them to publicize the accomplishments and contributions of their employees. When publicizing employees' awards based on Rating of Records, do not publish the names of employees receiving QSIs. Employee's appraisal information is protected under the Privacy Act. Therefore, because it is a requirement to receive an Outstanding summary rating for a QSI, publishing the names of employees receiving a QSI would be disclosing their annual appraisal information.

TRANSITION

Congratulations! You have now completed the FSA Performance Management Advanced course. Remember to **refer to the most recent FSA Monetary Awards policy for the latest and most complete information.**

Appendix A: Exercise Feedback

SECTION 2: THE PLANNING PHASE

Page 2-5, Question 1

True or False? Cecile is a Budget Analyst in Programs Branch of Budget Division under the Deputy Administrator for Management. She has the Execution of Duties element in her performance plan.

Cecile's FSA strategic goal is FSA Crosscutting Management Initiative, Objective 3: Improving strategic accountability.

True. To find this answer, locate the Budget Analyst position under the Execution of Duties element, using the Measurable Standards Aligning USDA and FSA Strategic Goals by Element job aid. It indicates that the FSA strategic goal is FSA Crosscutting Management (C-CM) Initiative, Objective 3. According to the FSA Strategic Goals aligned with USDA Strategic Goals job aid C-CM, Objective 3 is improving strategic accountability.

Page 2-6, Question 2

True or False? Cecile is a Budget Analyst in Programs Branch of Budget Division under the Deputy Administrator for Management. She has the Execution of Duties element in her performance plan.

Cecile's USDA strategic goal is Goal #2 Enhance the Competitiveness and Sustainability of Rural Farm Economics, Objective 2.1: Expand domestic market opportunities.

False. The correct answer is USDA Management Initiative: Establish Budget and Performance Integration. To find this answer, locate the Budget Analyst position under the Execution of Duties element, using the Measurable Standards Aligning USDA and FSA Strategic Goals by Element job aid. It indicates USDA Management Initiative: Budget and Performance Integration.

Page 2-11, Select Type of Measure

For each measure listed, select its type (i.e., timeliness, qualitative, quantitative, or cost-effectiveness).

Measures	Type of Measure
Program plans and guidance are responsive to objectives and requirements of the agency.	Qualitative

Performs CDAT functions no less than 40 percent of job time.	Quantitative
Limits personal calls, emails, and internet use to breaks and lunch hour, with no more than three exceptions per month.	Cost-effectiveness
Maintains cycle time of 2 weeks.	Timeliness
Reviews and edits draft correspondence and briefings to ensure correct format and grammatical usage.	Qualitative

Page 2-14, Classify Each Measure

Classify each measure as effective or ineffective.

Item	Effective/Ineffective	Feedback
Ensures investments achieve goals.	Ineffective	This measurable is not specific, objective, or observable. A better measurable standard would be: Ensures investments achieve at least 90 percent of cost and schedule goals.
Prepares written documents that are clear, concise, and understandable within established timeframes, with no exceptions.	Ineffective	This measurable standard is not written at the Fully Successful level. A better measurable standard would be: Prepares written documents that are clear, concise, and understandable within established timeframes, with no more than three exceptions.
Communicates clearly with stakeholders and shares accurate information, with no more than three exceptions.	Effective	This is an effective measurable standard.
Responds to complex program questions.	Ineffective	This measurable standard is ineffective because it is not specific and objective. A better measurable

		standard is: Responds to complex program questions within 24 hours, with no more than six to eight exceptions.

Page 2-14, Choose Appropriate Measure

Use the information for the sample employee provided below and the job aids in Resources to answer the following question.

Cecile is a Budget Analyst in Programs Branch of Budget Division under Administrator for Management. She has the Execution of Duties element in her performance plan.

An appropriate measurable standard for Cecile is:

A. Responds to general loan program questions within 24 hours, with no more than one exception per 2 months.
B. Completes pilot implementation of a budget and performance integration COTS solution for the FY 2008 budget review by 9/30/06; writes clear, concise pilot evaluation report with recommendations for needed changes.
C. Oversees projects so they meet milestone and target dates and follows applicable SDLC standards and guidelines.
D. Program plans and guidance are responsive to objectives and requirements of the Agency.

The correct answer is B. To find this answer, locate the Budget Analyst position under the Execution of Duties element, using the Measurable Standards Aligning USDA and FSA Strategic Goals by Element job aid. It indicates that one of the appropriate measurable standards is: Completes pilot implementation of a budget and performance integration COTS solution for the FY 2008 budget review by 9/30/06; writes clear, concise pilot evaluation report with recommendations for needed changes. While the others are well written, they are not appropriate for this position or element.

SECTION 3: THE MONITORING PHASE

Page 3-8, Classify Each Statement

Classify each statement as effective or ineffective documentation.

Item	Effective/Ineffective	Feedback
Bill Hawkinson's report "Cost of Training," dated December 22, is well written and well researched.	Effective	The statement identifies the situation, circumstances, or results of the performance.
It is a good report.	Ineffective	The statement is not specific. Be objective and specific.
His writing style is similar to mine.	Ineffective	This is a statement of personal preference. Do not color the facts with personal preferences.
The report is formatted according to Agency standards.	Effective	The statement is brief, specific, and detailed.
He researched the costs of developing and conducting training, as well as transportation, lodging, and missed work time costs within the Agency and other government agencies.	Effective	The statement supports the fact that the report was well researched.
I think he thought through the uses of the report very well.	Ineffective	This statement is a judgment; it does not show objectivity.
The report is detailed enough to include all factors that should be considered when making training decisions.	Effective	The statement includes information on the impact of the performance.
The report was completed on time, with only a few	Effective	The statement includes specific facts about the quality of the report.

minor typographical errors.		The supervisor should keep the sample as part of the documentation.
This was a special assignment for Bill, outside his normal job duties.	Effective	The statement includes information that illustrates performance in relation to expectations.

Page 3-11, Classify Each Statement

Classify each statement as effective or ineffective.

Item	Effective/Ineffective	Feedback
Your presentation at the meeting today took nearly twice as long as the agenda allotted, so I had to postpone some important topics. Pay more attention to the time and plan accordingly.	Effective	This statement provides specific examples and details, describes what the employee actually did and what he or she should do instead, is clear and direct and does not judge or make assumptions, and focuses strictly on the facts.
I'm getting tired of your disrespect for me and the staff. See if you can manage to be on time for our next staff meeting.	Ineffective	Concentrate on the facts and do not include any opinions or judgments. A more effective statement is, "The staff and I have had to wait for you at meetings twice before. You need to arrive at the meeting on time and fully prepared."
I noticed that you are rushing to get more work completed at the expense of quality. You have to maintain the quantity and the quality of your work.	Ineffective	This statement includes an assumption based on the supervisor's perceptions and personal bias. A more effective statement is, "Your calculations have been incorrect on the last three reports you've submitted."
Good job!	Ineffective	This statement is vague and not descriptive. A more effective feedback statement is, "You did a great job on the report. It was thorough, accurate, and on time."

Your analysis of yesterday's assignment was thorough and complete. In addition, your report was clear and well organized.	Effective	Use your judgment about when to give feedback. Sometimes it is appropriate to give it immediately. Other times, it is best to think about what to say and set aside a time and place. Once you are experienced and adept at giving effective feedback, give it as close to the performance as possible.

Page 3-11, Write a Positive and a Constructive Feedback Statement

Given the scenario below, write a positive and a constructive feedback statement.

On Friday, March 9, your secretary Michelle was juggling an unusually high volume of telephone calls. During this timeframe, she completed a draft briefing, due out Monday morning. At some point, you noted that she was quick to answer each call and say, "Please hold," without giving the caller time to reply if they could or not. As a result, some key information from a director— who called while he was between flights—was not received, delaying the report.

Possible Example of Positive Feedback: Michelle, your ability to complete the draft briefing in the midst of all the telephone chaos was outstanding (what you liked). It took determination to remain focused with all those distractions (professional qualities). We were able to meet the briefing deadline as a result (impact).

Possible Example of Constructive Feedback: During that period of unusually high volume of calls (situation), you put callers on hold without waiting for a response from them (behavior). As a result, the director who was traveling and needed to give me a last bit of information waited on hold for quite awhile and then left for his flight without giving you the information so the report was delayed in going out. (impact). In the future, please take the extra time to listen for a caller's response, so that things that are urgent are dealt with quickly (desired behavior).

Page 3-15 through 3-17, Indicate if Each Statement is Effective or Ineffective

Read the following excerpt of the mid-year conversation between Betty and her supervisor. Indicate whether each statement is effective or ineffective.

Transcript	Effective / Ineffective	Feedback
Supervisor: . . . We'll be going over your accomplishments so far this year and checking your progress against the performance plan we agreed to during your Performance Planning meeting. If necessary, we can update your plan to accommodate any changes in your duties. Then we'll evaluate any developmental activities you've completed to date and identify any future opportunities for you. Do you have any questions about the objectives of this Mid-Year Review? **Betty:** No, that pretty much covers what I expected for this meeting.	Effective	Reviewing the meeting objectives with the employee is a must! You want to prevent the employee from feeling surprised or ambushed by the content of the discussion.
Supervisor: Great. Let me say right off the bat, Betty, that I know you've been working really hard. I've noticed the effort you've put into sharpening your written communication skills.	Effective	Another "Do" is giving the employee a general overview of his or her performance to date. You should first acknowledge areas of success and, if necessary, tactfully mention that you also have concerns about some areas of performance.
Supervisor: Most of your work is right on target, but because you have missed several deadlines, I'd like for us to take time today to talk about time management	Ineffective	"But" statements are to be avoided if at all possible. Most people will focus on the negative information that follows the "but" and ignore the positive feedback that preceded it. Try to find another way to transition from areas of success to areas of concern, perhaps with a statement such as,

Transcript	Effective / Ineffective	Feedback
		"Most of your work is right on target. In light of the difficulties you've encountered in meeting some deadlines . . . ."
Supervisor: . . . Looking at your performance over these past six months, it's apparent that oral communication is one of your strong suits. During our staff meetings you are always willing to participate and share your opinions. During the last two meetings your efforts have kept us focused on our agenda items. You also draw others into the discussion and get them to share their opinions. What are your thoughts on this? **Betty:** Yes. It just seems to me that when more people are involved in a discussion, everyone feels more committed to the issue; it's not just a few dominant people pushing their ideas. When everyone's involved, we can all take ownership of our decisions.	Effective	This is an example of a Give statement—when you share your point of view with the employee. When you are giving information to your employees, use language that is specific and objective. Sharing the information honestly and using detailed examples helps keep the discussion free of bias.
Supervisor: I couldn't agree more; keep it up. Analyzing your organizational skills across the board, it's obvious you are a good team worker, Betty. While this is great, I would like to share some ideas on how you might better manage your time and	Effective	This is an example of a Merge statement—when you merge ideas to form a conclusion. Remember that Merge statements don't just come at the end of your discussion. When you come to any sort of conclusion, make the effort to support the employee's ideas rather than forcing your own.

Transcript	Effective / Ineffective	Feedback
resources.		
Supervisor: The last deadline didn't go so well, did it? **Betty:** I'm not sure what you mean. We got the report to the Director on time.	Ineffective	This is a closed question. This type of question is not always inappropriate, but as a general rule, a review meeting results in better discussion when you use open-ended questions. Since you are seeking information from the employee here, a better question might be, "What happened when the team had to meet the August deadline?"
Supervisor: True, but the process of getting it ready was stressful for everyone. Your ability to handle due dates impacts how well other team members are able to meet them. Your analysis piece was only the first part of the team's report. Because you took extra days to finish it, the rest of the team's work was pushed back too.	Effective	This is another example of a Give statement that demonstrates the use of descriptive, nonjudgmental language. Use clear, expressive, and illustrative words that clarify the situation but that do not express a personal opinion.
Supervisor: Other issues only added to the stress. Do you remember how difficult it was for the team to complete the project on time? **Betty:** Yes.	Ineffective	Avoid using vague or nonspecific statements when reviewing employee performance. Weak generalizations are of no use; they don't signal what should be continued or what needs to be improved. A more specific statement would be, "The situation got worse because we were also dealing with a printer problem and the work time we lost because the network was down for a day and a half."
Supervisor: What would have helped you finish your analysis by the original	Effective	This is an example of a Get statement. When seeking to elicit information from your employees, use open-ended questions, i.e., questions that require

Transcript	Effective / Ineffective	Feedback
deadline?		more than a yes or no answer. Asking open-ended, reflective, and direct questions helps stimulate discussion.
Betty: . . . So you found Derek Dovey's book helpful? **Supervisor:** It absolutely made a difference in my work habits. I am an enthusiastic believer in his 10 Habits of Highly Productive People. µI'd be happy to let you borrow my copy. Take a look at the chapter on time management. In fact, why don't you schedule some time to read it by next Friday? We can plan to meet again then to discuss strategies you want to try and how I can support your efforts. **Betty:** Thanks for the suggestion. It sounds like that may help me prioritize my work better. Then I think I'll feel better about joining that detail in Dallas in December. **Supervisor:** Right.	Effective	You want your employees to consistently strive for excellence and improve their performance. Brainstorm with them on ways to enhance their areas of success and to support their areas of development.
Supervisor: Let's both make a note to add information on that detail to your performance plan.	Effective	Often, situations arise after your initial Performance Planning meeting that warrant changes to the employee's performance plan. It is important that you and the employee are clear and in agreement on any changes.

SECTION 4: THE DEVELOPING PHASE

Page 4-2 and 4-3, Classify each of the following scenarios.

Scenario	Performance vs. Misconduct	Feedback
Marie has been late for work five times in the last month and was late again today. You had to ask another person to prepare documents immediately for an important meeting. This is the second time this month you've had to find someone else to do Marie's work because of her lateness.	Misconduct	Tardiness is a common type of attendance-related misconduct. Ensure that the employee understands the policy, document the incident and feedback given, and take appropriate disciplinary action.
You supervise Chris, a newly hired Loan Specialist for a newly mandated farm loan program. One of her job responsibilities is to notify farmers of missing information on their loan applications. Lately, farmers have complained that letters from Chris are filled with errors and have a threatening tone. Very specific procedural guidelines exist for letters to farmers, and Chris has attended training on developing those letters.	Performance	Chris is demonstrating poor performance despite being provided procedures guidelines and training; however, the farm loan program is new, so Chris may be learning the procedures. The main concern is the perception of the letters' tone. Ensure Chris understands the guidelines and refers to them while she is still learning the program.
Your employee Earl spends a lot of time socializing at work. For example, you saw him chatting with a friend for over 30 minutes yesterday. He also spends at least several hours a day chatting with coworkers about non-business topics. He is usually 10 to 20 minutes late each day and takes long breaks and lunches. Because Erle recently transferred between County Offices, you are not sure that he can do every aspect of the job, although his previous	Both	Being tardy includes returning late from breaks and lunch. Also, Earl is clearly wasting time. He may also have a performance problem; research shows that many employees arrive with existing performance problems.

Scenario	Performance vs. Misconduct	Feedback
performance appraisals were satisfactory.		
You have been reassigned to supervise Mario's workgroup, Accounting Clerks and Technicians. Although Mario was recently promoted, he is doing much less than expected, given his new position. As a result, you severely modified his assignment, almost back to Accounting Clerk responsibilities. You do believe, however, that with a little work, Mario can get better.	Performance	Mario may not have the skills and knowledge necessary for his new job's critical elements since he has recently been promoted. Provide Mario with coaching and training and monitor his performance. If Mario does not improve, assess if he has the skills for this position and take appropriate actions.

Page 4-5 through 4-7, Analyzing Performance Problems Practice and Case Study

<u>Feedback</u>

Step 1. Define the performance problem.

Describe the performance discrepancy.

- Bob has developed an uncooperative attitude about helping Program Technicians in other County Offices.
- The PT is now extremely slow in completing routine requests.
- The accuracy of his information is declining.
- The quality of work does not meet the CED's expectations.

Identify the extent of the problem.

> This problem is severe and pervasive. The PT is extremely slow in completing routine requests, and the quality is usually poor.

Assess organizational impact.

Work is not getting done in a timely manner, nor is it being done well. Other County Offices are upset (which could affect morale).

Feedback

Step 2. Identify reasons for the performance problem.

The Program Technician's performance problem is mainly due to environmental and motivational/attitudinal issues.

Knowledge/ Skill Factors

- There does not appear to be a skill deficiency because, in the past, the Program Technician was a high performer, completing high-quality projects on time.

Environmental Constraints

- The rearrangement of the office may have contributed to a sense of isolation and the distance between this PT and the other Program Technicians.
- It does not appear that clear expectations were set or clearly communicated to the Program Technician about the job. The PT views the job as only doing work that pertains to his County Office. The PT became resentful and worked more slowly after receiving work from Program Technicians from other County Offices.
- Frank, the Farm Loan Officer, may be an obstacle because of his socializing.

Motivation/Attitude

- It could be that the Program Technician feels "punished" for good performance since this PT seems to be the only one in the office who is getting requests for this information.
- There are also positive consequences when the Program Technician works more slowly because then others in the office have to respond to outside requests. In addition, the FLM discussed promotion possibilities after performance had dropped.

Feedback

Step 3. Identify solutions to the problem.

To address the environmental issues:

- Tell Bob that assisting other offices with timely, accurate information will be included in the PT's job performance evaluation
- Consider placing the PT back with the rest of the staff or moving Frank.

To address the motivational/attitude issues:

- Remove the penalty for efficiency; distribute outside requests more equally among PTs
- Create incentives to maintain quality service.

In addition, to address any knowledge/skills issues, give constructive feedback so that Bob understands that quality matters.

Page 4-9 and 4-10, Indicate whether particular aspects of the meeting are effective or ineffective.

Transcript	Effective / Ineffective	Feedback
Supervisor: Sally , I noticed that you turned in the report several days beyond the 2-week timeframe with several grammar, spelling, and style mistakes. This is very unusual for your work, especially with no explanation about why it was late. There were no errors with the facts and analysis.	Effective	The supervisor has told the employee what the problem is and how it does not meet expected performance, as well as being specific about what Sally did well.
Supervisor: The report was late and not up to your usual standards for style and presentation. It seems that you are having a hard time with setting priorities. Is that correct? **Sally:** No. My workload has increased a lot lately, and I underestimated how long other tasks would take. I	Ineffective	Ask Sally why she thinks the problem is occurring communicate your ideas about the possible reasons for the problem, and work toward reaching agreement. A better example would be: **Supervisor:** It's not like you to turn your reports in late. Talk to me a little about what's

Transcript	Effective / Ineffective	Feedback
just became overwhelmed. I figured it was better to turn in an ugly but correct report than to delay it any longer.		been going on. **Sally:** My workload has increased a lot lately, and I underestimated how long other tasks would take. I just became overwhelmed. I figured it was better to turn in an ugly but correct report than to delay it any longer. **Supervisor:** It sounds to me like you are having a hard time with juggling the priorities of the additional work. Is that correct? **Sally:** Yes
Supervisor: Do you have any ideas to keep this from happening in the future? **Sally:** Yes. I think it would help if I took a time management course. **Supervisor:** That is a good idea. I have noticed in the past your reports are usually turned in "just in the nick of time," although the quality is good. I also would like the chance to shuffle your workload if you are overwhelmed. Can you please let me know in the future as soon as there is a chance of this happening again?	Effective	The supervisor asked Sally for/her ideas for resolving the problem and communicated his idea about possible solutions.

Transcript	Effective / Ineffective	Feedback
Supervisor: So, let's get you enrolled in a time management course. I think it would also be good to review your performance plan to ensure that this new workload is accounted for. **Sally:** I agree. Do you think we could also go over what's on my plate now, so I know how you would like it prioritized?	Effective	Sally and her supervisor agreed on the steps to take to improve or change her performance and what her supervisor will provide.

SECTION 5: THE RATING PHASE

Page 5-4, Writing Accomplishment Narratives

Statement	Do	Don't	Feedback
1. Greg does a great job in this element.		**X**	Don't. The narrative should Include specific examples of performance. It is too vague.
2. The analyses Greg performed included new data sources that were well researched and gave managers valuable perspectives and insight.	**X**		Do. This statement includes the impact of Greg's achievement.
3. Greg conducted this research and analysis in a very short timeframe and partially without the use of a computer.	**X**		Do. Include descriptions of flexibility, adaptability, and/or resourcefulness that support the rationale for the rating.
4. I thought Greg handled working under pressure very well.		**X**	Don't. This statement is judgmental and reflects personal beliefs.

Page 5-7 through 5-10, Determine Whether Meeting Statements are Effective or Ineffective

Transcript	Effective/Ineffective	Feedback
Supervisor: . . . First, let's review the year overall. By and large, Abbie, your job performance has been right on target. Your work on special projects and reports has been efficient and productive, your coaching has been successful as well, and your listening skills have improved noticeably. I'd be interested in hearing what	Effective	It is important to provide an overall picture of the employee's performance during the rating period. You should first acknowledge areas of success with an overview and specific examples when appropriate.

Transcript	Effective / Ineffective	Feedback
you think went well for you this year. **Abbie:** I thought the new Handbook was done well, and we finished on time, despite losing two team members.		
Supervisor: So you're pleased with that project, and so am I. It made a big difference in how we will all work in the future. **Abbie:** Yes I am. I'm glad you have a positive view of my performance as well.	Effective	This statement shows the supervisor using good listening skills. You can demonstrate that you are hearing the content of the employee's comments by reflecting back (paraphrasing) the information that you heard.
Supervisor: Your efforts haven't gone unnoticed. When we talked at the Mid-Year Review meeting, we discussed how you could polish your interpersonal skills. If you recall, we talked about how important it was for you to come across as open and approachable to your coworkers.	Effective	This is an example of a Give statement—when you share your point of view with the employee. When you are giving information to the employee, use language that is specific and objective. Sharing the information honestly and using detailed examples helps keep the discussion free of bias.
Supervisor: Your work on the project this summer showed a significant change in your behavior. By the way, did you like the Field and Headquarters personnel you met during the process?	Ineffective	Avoid using vague or nonspecific statements. The statement, Significant Change, does not indicate whether the change was an improvement or deterioration in performance. Generalizations like this don't signal what should be continued or what needs to be improved. A more specific statement would be,

Transcript	Effective / Ineffective	Feedback
		"Your work on the LDP Amendment in July showed that you made a serious effort to be more open. You maintained your own perspective, and at the same time you showed your willingness to listen to your coworkers and encourage their questions. This really built a more positive rapport with them."
Supervisor: . . . Let's look at your performance in each of the elements and discuss the ratings I've assigned. . . .	Effective	It is important that you take the time to address your employee's performance in each element, no matter what rating you are assigning to it. Review your narrative and any supporting documentation. Point out how you arrived at the rating for each element.
Supervisor: . . . Moving on to the Team Leadership element. I think you can improve in the way you delegate tasks and communicate with your team-members. Do you remember we talked earlier in the year about the issue of your not taking the time to answer questions and followup in a timely manner with your colleagues? **Abbie:** Yeah, I do remember that. I'm not happy that because I didn't get back to my teammates with answers negatively impacted the outcomes of	Effective	Be clear and specific when discussing employee performance. Use facts that support your assessment of his or her performance.

Transcript	Effective / Ineffective	Feedback
projects. I can guarantee I'll be making this one of my top priorities for the next year.		
Supervisor: We'll look at what development opportunities are available for you to hone your team leadership skills, especially around giving and getting information. **Abbie:** I would appreciate your guidance with that.	Effective	You are identifying the developmental opportunities that will improve your employee's performance in the specific area where most improvement is needed. This serves both to reinforce the need for development and to target the learning.
Supervisor: I'm confident that you'll do better sharing information with your teammates in the future. For this performance cycle though, those lapses impact your Team Leadership rating. Do you understand why I'm giving you a Does Not Meet in this area? **Abbie:** Yes, I understand . . .	Effective	When you assign a rating for each element and expectation during your preparation for this Year-End meeting, remember that it is a draft score, subject to possible change. If the employee brings some significant information to the discussion, you may find you want to change the rating for that criterion to reflect the new information.
Supervisor: . . . We both agree that the additional special projects you worked on over the course of the year really gave you a chance to practice and enhance the writing skills you identified as a development need at the beginning of the year. Future opportunities on similar special projects should definitely be part of	Effective	This is an example of a Merge statement—when you merge ideas to form a conclusion. Remember that Merge statements shouldn't come just at the end of your discussion. When you come to any sort of conclusion, make the effort to support the employee's ideas rather than forcing your own.

Transcript	Effective / Ineffective	Feedback
your performance plan.		
Supervisor: As soon as we get a better idea of how many Handbooks and Notices we'll be responsible for in the coming year, let's make sure you're named as the team lead for one or two of the project cycles. This will optimize your writing ability and give you the opportunity to develop your team leadership skills. **Abbie:** I'll be looking forward to the chance to do that.	Effective	You want your employees to consistently strive for excellence and improve their performance. Work with them to find ways to enhance their areas of success and to support their areas of development.
Supervisor: You can see that based on the individual ratings for each of your four elements, on your Summary Rating is at the Fully Successful level. Does this make sense to you? **Abbie:** Yes, you've been pretty clear. I understand that I was still able to earn a Fully Successful rating for the year because I was rated "Does not meet" in the non-critical element Team Leadership, but I was rated "Exceeds" in Execution of Duties element.	Effective	You arrived at a Summary Rating for the employee's performance when you created your first draft of the Form. As you discuss the individual ratings with the employee, keep in mind that if you make any changes to those ratings (as a result of the employee's input), you also have to recalculate the Summary Rating.

Transcript	Effective / Ineffective	Feedback
Supervisor: Right. Your overall performance rating is based on a summary of the ratings for the four elements we chose this year. We have also identified development needs in terms of your information sharing skills, and some opportunities for your continuous development by making sure that you are the team lead on at least one project in the next year. What questions do you have? **Abbie:** I don't think I have any questions right now. I understand how I got the rating, and I'm clear on what my development needs are for the coming year.	Effective	You summarized your employee's understanding and clarified how you arrived at the summary rating. You also revisited the agreements you made about development needs and opportunities. Finally, you checked for understanding using an open-ended question to solicit a response from your employee.

Appendix B: Job Aids

Policy for Determining the Rating and Reviewing Officials

General Rule

Unless otherwise specified, the rating official is the employee's first-line supervisor and the reviewing official is the employee's second-line supervisor. The exceptions to this rule are the:

- County Executive Director
- Program Technician

County Executive Director

The rating official for the County Executive Director (CED) is the chairperson of the County Office Committee (COC). The reviewing official for the CED is the District Director (DD). Because of problems with EmpowHR, the CED's performance plan shall be handled as outlined below.

The DD shall:

- Work with chairperson of the COC to prepare a draft performance plan, mid year review, or appraisal (whichever is necessary) for each CED. This shall be done on appropriate form in AD-435 series.

  Note: AD-435 series is available from the FFAS Employee Forms Online Website at http://165.221.16.90/dam/ffasforms/forms.html.

- Present draft document to CED for review and comment.
- Work with chairperson of the COC to finalize document.
- Present final document to CED.
- Enter information on the CED into EmpowHR.

Note: The DD will enter information into EmpowHR as the CED's rating official. The information will flow in EmpowHR to the State Executive Director (SED), who will act as the reviewing official. Once the SED has approved the document, it will flow to the CED, who will view and certify it. The information will then flow back to the DD.

The DD shall then:

- Print a hard copy of the document from EmpowHR.
- Give the printed document to the COC chairperson to sign off as rating official.
- Sign the printed document as the reviewing official.
- Present the printed document to the CED for his or her signature.

Policy for Determining the Rating and Reviewing Officials (continued)

County Executive Director (continued)

- Give a copy of the printed document to the CED.
- Submit the printed document to the State Office for review, if required.
- If working on a performance plan or mid-year review, keep the original printed document in a secure file for later review/rating.
- Follow through with completion of the process in EmpowHR, so that the information will transmit to the National Financial Center (NFC).

Program Technician

The following table lists the rating officials and reviewing officials for Program Technicians (PTs) with various workloads:

IF the PT is . . .	THEN the Rating Official is . . .	And the Reviewing Official is . . .
GS employee performing both Farm Program (FP) and Farm Loan Program (FLP) work	Farm Loan Manager (FLM) in collaboration with the CED	DD
GS employee performing only FLP work	FLM	DD
CO employee performing only FP work	CED	DD in collaboration with the COC Chairperson
CO employee performing both FP and FLP work	CED in collaboration with the FLM	DD in collaboration with the COC Chairperson
CO employee performing only FLP work	FLM ***Note:*** *Since the CED is the supervisor of record for the CO-PT, all performance plans/ratings will need to be signed on hard copy by the FLM for CO-PT's who perform FLP work.*	DD

Policy for Determining the Rating and Reviewing Officials (continued)

Program Technician (continued)

In any instance where the rating or review is a collaborative process, the parties involved sit down and discuss their positions. The "official" rating/reviewing official (listed first in the table) will then input all information for both parties.

The current workflow in EmpowHR has the CED as the rating official for the CO-PT with the DD as the reviewing official. For all instances where a CO-PT performs both FP and FLP work or FLP work only, signatures of both the FLM and the CED are required. Hard copy documents will be necessary in these situations until EmpowHR can be modified.

Specific Field Office Situations

- All discussions on CED and CO-PT performance plans, mid-year reviews, and appraisals shall be documented in the COC Executive Minutes
- DDs who do not yet have loan approval authority and who are rating officials for Farm Loan Managers should collaborate with the Farm Loan Chief on any elements that require knowledge of Farm Loan Programs.
- The parties involved should sit down and discuss their positions. The DD will then input all information for both parties
- If the SED is the rating official for an employee, then DAFO is the reviewing official for that employee

FSA Strategic Goals Aligned with USDA Strategic Goals

This job aid shows how FSA's strategic goals are linked to USDA's goals and objectives. For example, the FSA goal "Supporting Productive Farms and Ranches" supports the USDA goal "Enhance the Competitiveness and Sustainability of Rural Farm Economics." The graphic also shows how FSA's Cross-Cutting Management Initiatives support USDA's Management Initiatives. *The first two pages are a graphical representation of FSA's strategic goal aligned with USDA Strategic goalss. The last two pages is the same information in a table format.*

USDA GOAL #2
ENHANCE THE COMPETITIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF RURAL FARM ECONOMICS

- Objective 2.1 – Expand domestic market opportunities
- Objective 2.2 – Increase the efficiency of domestic agricultural production and marketing systems
- Objective 2.3 – Provide risk management and financial tools to farmers and ranchers

USDA GOAL # 4
ENHANCE PROTECTION AND SAFETY OF NATION'S AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SUPPLY

and severity of agricultural pest and disease outbreaks

USDA GOAL #6
PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE NATION'S NATURAL RESOURCE BASE AND ENVIRONMENT

- Objective 6.1 – Protect watershed health to ensure clean and abundant water.
- Objective 6.2 – Enhance soil quality to maintain productive working cropland
- Objective 6.3 – Protect forests and grasslands

FSA GOAL #1
SUPPORTING PRODUCTIVE FARMS AND RANCHES

- Objective 1.1 – Improving Access to Capital
- Objective 1.2 – Mitigating Market Losses
- Objective 1.3 – Mitigating Losses from Natural Disasters

FSA GOAL #2
SUPPORTING SECURE AND AFFORDABLE FOOD AND FIBER

- Objective 2.1 – Providing Adequate, Secure Storage Capacity that Maintains Quality
- Objective 2.2 – Improving Purchase and Delivery of Food Aid

FSA GOAL #3
CONSERVING NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENHANCING THE ENVIRONMENT

- Objective 3.1 – Improving Conservation Practices
- Objective 3.2 – Targeting Lands to Maximize Conservation Benefits
- Objective 3.3 – Targeting Lands to Maximize Conservation Benefits

FSA Strategic Goals Aligned with USDA Strategic Goals

USDA MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE:

IMPROVE HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

FSA CROSS-CUTTING MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES:

Objective #1: Ensuring Civil Rights

Objective #2: Strategically Managing Human Capital

Objective #5: Improving Stakeholder Satisfaction

USDA MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES:

- IMPROVE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
- IMPLEMENT COMPETITIVE SOURCING
- ELIMINATE IMPROPER PAYMENTS
- IMPROVE REAL PROPERTY MANAGEMENT
- ESTABLISH BUDGET/PERFORMANCE INTEGRATION

FSA CROSS-CUTTING MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES:

Objective #3: Improving Strategic Accountability

USDA MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES:

- EXPAND ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT
- IMPLEMENT COMPETITIVE SOURCING
- ESTABLISH BUDGET/PERFORMANCE INTEGRATION

FSA CROSS-CUTTING MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES:

Objective #4: Improving Business Process Effectiveness

FSA Strategic Goals Aligned with USDA Strategic Goals

FSA Strategic Goals	USDA Goals and Objectives
Goal 1, Supporting Productive Farms and Ranches • **Objective 1.1,** Improving Access to Capital • **Objective 1.2,** Mitigating Market Losses • **Objective 1.3,** Mitigating Losses from Natural Disasters **Goal 2**, Supporting Secure and Affordable Food and Fiber • **Objective 2.1,** Providing Adequate, Secure Storage Capacity that Maintains Quality • **Objective 2.2,** Improving Purchase and Delivery of Food Aid	**Goal 2,** Enhance the Competitiveness and Sustainability of Rural Farm Economics • **Objective 2.1**, Expand domestic market opportunities • **Objective 2.2**, Increase the efficiency of domestic agricultural production and marketing systems • **Objective 2.3**, Provide risk management and financial tools to farmers and ranchers. **Goal 4,** Enhance Protection and Safety of the Nation's Agriculture and Food Supply • **Objective 4.2**, Reduce the number and severity of agricultural pest and disease outbreaks
Goal 3, Conserving Natural Resources and Enhancing the Environment • **Objective 3.1,** Improving Conservation Practices • **Objective 3.2,** Targeting Lands to Maximize Conservation Benefits • **Objective 3.3,** Targeting Lands to Maximize Conservation Benefits	**Goal 6,** Protect and Enhance the Nation's Natural Resource Base and Environment • **Objective 6.1**, Protect watershed health to ensure clean and abundant water. • **Objective 6.2**, Enhance soil quality to maintain productive working cropland • **Objective 6.3,** Protect forests and grasslands

FSA Strategic Goals Aligned with USDA Strategic Goals

FSA Cross-Cutting Management Initiatives	USDA Management Initiatives
Objective 1, Ensuring Civil Rights	Improve Human Capital Management
Objective 2, Strategically Managing Human Capital	Improve Human Capital Management
Objective 3, Improving Strategic Accountability	• Improve Financial Management • Implement Competitive Sourcing • Eliminate Improper Payments • Improve Real Property Management • Establish Budget and Performance Integration
Objective 4, Improving Business Process Effectiveness	• Expand Electronic Government • Implement Competitive Sourcing • Establish Budget and Performance Integration
Objective 5, Improve Stakeholder Satisfaction	Improve Human Capital Management

Functional Areas/Divisions Aligned with FSA Strategic Goals

This job aid shows how each of FSA's functional areas/divisions support FSA goals and objectives (and Cross-Cutting Management (C-CM) Objectives) and can help you identify the FSA goals and objectives that your particular work unit supports. For example, if you work in the Price Support/Income Support Division, your particular work unit may support Goal #1, Goal #2, and/or C-CM Objective #1. *The first two pages are a graphical representation of FSA's functional areas/divisions alignment with FSA strategic goals. The last two pages is the same information in a table format.*

You can also use this information to help you link employee's performance elements to FSA goals and objectives. (Note: Measurable standards must be linked to the FSA strategic goals and be aligned through the levels of management.

FSA Goal #1 Supporting Productive Farms and Ranches

Objective 1.1 – Improving Access to Capital

Farm Programs
- Price Support/Income Support
- Aerial Photography
- Outreach

Farm Loans
Field Operations
Commodity Operations

Objective 1.2 – Mitigating Market Losses

Farm Programs
- Production, Emergencies & Compliance
- Aerial Photography

Farm Loans
Field Operations

Objective 1.3 – Mitigating Losses from Natural Disasters

Farm Programs
- Production, Emergencies & Compliance
- Price Support/Income Support
- Aerial Photography

Farm Loans
Field Operations
Commodity Operations

FSA Goal #2 Supporting Secure and Affordable Food and Fiber

Objective 2.1 – Providing Adequate, Secure Storage

Farm Programs
- Price Support/Income Support
- Aerial Photography

Objective 2.2 – Improving Purchase and Delivery of Food Aid

Field Operations
Commodity Operations

FSA Goal #3 Conserving Natural Resources and Enhancing the Environment

Objective 3.1 – Improving Conservation

Farm Programs
- Aerial Photography
- Conservation & Environmental Programs

Objective 3.2 – Targeting Lands to Maximize Conservation Benefits

Farm Programs
- Aerial Photography
- Conservation & Environmental Programs

Objective 3.3 – Targeting Lands to Maximize Conservation

Farm Programs
- Aerial Photography
- Conservation & Environmental Programs

Functional Areas/Divisions Aligned with FSA Strategic Goals

FSA Cross-Cutting Management Initiatives

Objective #1- Ensuring Civil Rights

Farm Programs
- Price Support/Income Support
- Aerial Photography
- Outreach
- Conservation & Environmental Programs

Farm Loans
Field Operations
Commodity Operations

Administrator for Management Divisions
- Human Resources
- Financial Management
- AMD?
- Management Services
- Budget Division
- Information Technology

Objective #2 – Strategically Managing Human Capital

Farm Programs
- Outreach
- Conservation & Environmental Programs

Administrator for Management Divisions
- Human Resources

Objective #3 – Improving Strategic Accountability

Farm Programs
- Outreach
- Conservation & Environmental Programs

Administrator for Management Divisions
- Financial Management
- AMD?
- Management Services
- Budget Division

Objective #4 – Improving Business Process Effectiveness

Farm Programs
- Outreach
- Conservation & Environmental Programs

Administrator for Management Divisions
- Budget Divisions
- Information Technology

Objective #5- Improve Stakeholder Satisfaction

Farm Programs
- Outreach
- Conservation & Environmental Programs

Functional Areas/Divisions Aligned with FSA Strategic Goals
FSA Strategic Goals

Strategic Goal 1 – Supporting Productive Farms and Ranches

Objective 1.1 – Improving Access to Capital

Objective 1.2 – Mitigating Market Losses

Objective 1.3 – Mitigating Losses from Natural Disasters

Strategic Goal 2 – Supporting Secure and Affordable Food and Fiber

Objective 2.1 – Providing Adequate, Secure Storage Capacity that Maintains Quality

Objective 2.2 – Improving Purchase and Delivery of Food Aid

Strategic Goal 3 – Conserving Natural Resources and Enhancing the Environment

Objective 3.1 – Improving Conservation Practices

Objective 3.2 – Targeting Lands to Maximize Conservation Benefits

Objective 3.3 – Targeting Lands to Maximize Conservation Benefits

Crosscutting Management Objectives Supporting FSA Strategic Goals

Objective 1 – Ensuring Civil Rights

Objective 2 – Strategically Managing Human Capital

Objective 3 – Improving Strategic Accountability

Objective 4 – Improving Business Process Effectiveness

Objective 5 – Improving Stakeholder Satisfaction

Functional Areas/Divisions Aligned with FSA Strategic Goals
Department Aligned with the FSA Strategic Goals

Farm Programs	
Production, Emergencies and Compliance	Goal 1, Objectives 1.2, 1.3
Price Support/Income Support	Goal 1, Objectives 1.1, 1.3 Goal 2, Objective 2.1 Cross-Cutting Management Initiative, Objective 1
Outreach	Goal 1, Objective 1.1 Cross-cutting Management Initiative: Objectives 1-5
Aerial photography	Goal 1, Objective 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 Goal 2, Objective 2.1 Goal 3, Objective 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 Cross-Cutting Management Initiative, Objective 1
Conservation and Environmental Protection	Goal 3, Objective 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 Cross-Cutting Management Initiative, Objectives 1-5
Farm Loans	
	Goal 1, Objective 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 Goal 3, Objective 3.2 Cross-Cutting Management Initiative, Objective 1
Field Operations	
	Goals 1, 2 and 3 Cross-Cutting Management Initiative, Objective 1
Administrator for Management	
Human Resources	Cross-cutting Management Initiatives, Objectives 1, 2
Financial Management	Cross-cutting Management Initiative, Objectives 1, 3
AMD ??	Cross-cutting Management Initiative, Objectives 1, 3
Management Services	Cross-cutting Management Initiative, Objectives 1, 3
Budget Division	Cross-cutting Management Initiatives, Objectives1, 3, 4
Information Technology	Cross-cutting Management Initiative, Objectives 1, 4
Commodity Operations	
	Goal 1, Objectives 1.1, 1.3 Goal 2, Objective 2.1, 2.2 Cross-cutting Management Initiatives, Objective 1

Menu of Recommended Elements

Execution of Duties. Completed work assignments are performed in a timely manner, assuring a quality of work that meets the needs of the organization. Appropriate work methods are selected for the development of work products. Work products do not require substantive revisions. Assignments are completed in accordance with applicable agency guidelines, including timeframes.

Communications. Oral and written communications are clear, correct, timely, and presented in an understandable manner. Supervisor and coworkers are informed of issues and problems when necessary. Information and guidance provided is timely and correct.

Supervision (Mandatory for all supervisors and managers). Work is assigned in a fair and effective manner. Technical guidance to subordinate staff is given in a timely manner. Performance management is implemented in accordance with procedures. Issues, concerns, or problems are handled promptly and fairly. To the extent possible, staff is properly trained and complies with occupational health and safety programs. Management decisions are supported and implemented within appropriate timeframes.

The required measurable standards under this element are:

– Has an employee performance plan that focus on results achieved, contain at least one element that is aligned with organizational goals, and are in place within 30 calendar days of the beginning of the appraisal period. Mid year reviews are conducted timely and according to Agency guidelines. Ratings are accurate and issued within 30 calendar days of the end of the appraisal period.

– Adheres to Safety and Occupational Health practices and procedures in order to promote and maintain a safe and healthful work environment for all employees. Upon report of unsafe/unhealthful condition, notifies appropriate office within 48 hours, and follows up and/or takes appropriate action until condition is resolved.

Team Leadership. Routinely leads individuals and team members toward specific goals and accomplishments. Provides encouragement, guidance, and directions as needed. Adjusts style to fit situation. Delegates appropriate authority in an effective manner. Coordinates functions of the team members. Demonstrates a sincere interest in employees' activities, abilities, etc.

Program Management. Manages program(s), resolving issues and problems within the employee's control. Monitors all aspects of program(s) for quality, effectiveness, and consistency. Program plans and guidance are responsive to objectives and requirements of the Agency. Policy instructions are appropriately issued and are accurate. Evaluates effectiveness of work and adjusts plans accordingly.

Menu of Recommended Elements (continued)

Special Projects. Special projects are regularly completed on time in a competent, accurate, and thorough manner. Completed projects comply with regulations and procedures. Special projects are completed independently, or reflect research and collaborations with others as required.

Research and Analysis. Thoroughly and accurately researches issues in a timely manner, using available reference sources (e.g., USDA manuals, or applicable law or regulations.) Makes reasonable recommendations or decisions based on available guidance.

Customer Service. Routinely displays courteous and tactful behavior. Projects a positive and professional image of USDA. Provides advice that is timely, responsive and accurate. Maintains appropriate rapport with internal and external customers. Develops and establishes working relations with external organizations as required. Keeps supervisor and/or team leader informed of difficult and/or controversial issues and unique problems. Takes actions to effectively solve problems before they have an adverse impact on the organization or other employees.

Resource Management. Monitors allocated funds and maintains complete and accurate records of expenditures. Routinely utilizes resources in an efficient and effective manner. Ensures that funds, property, and other resources are guarded against waste, loss, unauthorized use, and misappropriation.

Individual Contributions to the Team. Ordinarily displays dependability and reliability. Promotes open communication. Contributes creative ideas and actively participates in team meetings resulting in added value to the team's products and services. When problems arise, explores causes and assists in resolving them. Works with team members to appropriately implement decisions. Is usually open minded to new ideas and approaches in implementing the team's goals. Willingly accepts and acts on constructive criticism.

Supervisory Equal Employment Opportunity and Civil Rights. (Mandatory for all supervisors and managers). Performs all duties in a manner which consistently demonstrates fairness, cooperation, and respect towards coworkers, office visitors, and all others in the performance of official business. Demonstrates awareness of EO/OCR policies and responsibilities of Agency and Departmental goals of working to employ and develop a diverse, yet unified workforce.

Nonsupervisory Equal Employment Opportunity and Civil Rights. Performs all duties in a manner which consistently demonstrates fairness, cooperation, and respect towards coworkers, office visitors, and all others in the performance of official business. Demonstrates awareness of EO/OCR policies and responsibilities of Agency and Departmental goals of working to employ and develop a diverse, yet unified workforce. ***The element can be standalone or the language must be included with another element.***

Measurable Standards Aligning USDA and FSA Strategic Goals by Element

This job aid provides examples of measurable standards across the performance elements for various job positions within FSA. The tables also show the USDA Goal/Objective and the FSA Goal/Objective to which each measurable standard is linked, as well as the type of measure (timeliness, quantity, quality, cost-effectiveness) used.

While the measurable standards provided here are examples, you may use them as a basis for developing measurable standards for your employees, as appropriate.

Measurable Standards Aligning USDA and FSA Strategic Goals by Element

Execution of Duties

Position	Measurable Standards	Time	Quality	Quantity	Cost-Effectiveness
Management Analyst	**USDA Goal 2, Objective 2.2** **FSA Goal 1, Objective 1.1**				
	Directives are thoroughly and accurately edited including verifying references (100%), updating table of contents, assuring adherence to guidelines, and formatting according to current directives standards. No more than 1 exception per 20 directives.	X	X		X
	Handbooks with final approval are posted to EDS site. PDF of amended pages with exceptions noted is interfiled in full copy of handbook and forwarded to Kansas City within 1 day of assignment. No more than 1 exception per 10 Handbooks.	X			X
	Notices are edited and returned to writer within 1 day of assignment with noted exceptions.	X			
HQ Loan Specialist	**USDA Goal 2, Objective 2.2, 2.3** **FSA Goal 1, Objective 1.1**				
	Serves as Reviewer in Charge for at least 3 FLPRA reviews per year and, within that, completes reports within the 30 day time frame with no more than 2 exceptions per year.	X		X	X
	Assures that known instances of unsafe and unhealthful conditions are reported to supervisor (or designated official) within 48 hours of occurrence.	X			
	Reviews Federal Register documents, directives and forms prepared by FLP staff and ensures the following with no more than 3 exceptions per year: • Compliance with applicable statutes and regulations and consistency with other FLP issuance • Guidance is clear, consist and understandable as judged by customers. • Writer/Director judges comments as meaningful.		X		

Measurable Standards Aligning USDA and FSA Strategic Goals by Element

Execution of Duties (continued)

Position	Measurable Standards	Time	Quality	Quantity	Cost-Effectiveness
Secretary	**USDA Goal 2, Objective 2.3** **FSA Goal 1, Objective 1.3**	X	X		
	Updates and maintains directives such as program handbooks and notices within 2 days after the issuance of the directive with no more than 3 exceptions per 100 directives.	X			
	Picks up items from supervisor's out box at least 3 times per day with no more than 3 exceptions per quarter.	X			
	Completes travel arrangements and claim vouchers for supervisor within 2 days of request with no more than 2 exceptions per 6 months.				
	Limits personal calls, emails and internet use to breaks and lunch hour with no more than 3 exceptions per month.				X
Budget Analyst	**USDA Management Initiative: Budget and Performance Integration** **FSA C-CM, Objective 3**				
	Complete OMB designated Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) documentation for the FY 2008 budget review by 9/30/06. PART must be judged 'user friendly' by assessors.		X	X	
	Complete pilot implementation of a budget and performance integration COTS solution for the FY 2008 budget review by 9/30/06; write clear, concise pilot evaluation report with recommendations for needed changes.		X	X	
Branch Chief	**USDA Goal 2, Objective 2.2** **FSA Goal 2, Objective 2.1**				
	Formulates contractual terms and conditions for agreements that are legally defensible, and conducts negotiations with warehouse operators to arrive at mutually acceptable contract terms within established timeframes with no more than 1 exception per 10 contracts.	X	X		X
	Determines liabilities and recommends actions to be taken on contract violations / defaults based on verified claims within XX days of submitted claim; actions are handled such that no more than XX are legally challenged.	X	X		X

Measurable Standards Aligning USDA and FSA Strategic Goals by Element

Communications

Position	Measurable Standards	Time	Quality	Quantity	Cost-Effectiveness
Management analyst	**USDA Goal 2, Objective 2.2** **FSA Goal 1, Objective 1.1**				
	Writers are informed when edited directives are ready for pickup with follow-up notification provided within 1 day if directive has not left the office. No more than 1 exception per 6 months.	X			
	Conflicts or disagreements with customers or coworkers concerning directives issues are explained clearly to supervisor for decision/ resolution within 1 business day of occurrence.	X	X		
Secretary	**USDA Goal 2, Objective 2.3** **FSA Goal 1, Objective 1.3**				
	Responds to general loan program questions within 24 hours with no more than 1 exception per 2 months. Elevates more complex questions to supervisor, team leader, or other individual responsible within 2 hours of inquiry.	X	X		
	Reviews and edits draft correspondence and briefings to ensure correct format and grammatical usage with no more than 1 exception per 20 correspondences.		X		X
	Prepares final drafts (requiring no more than 1 re-rewrite) of assigned correspondence and other projects within 2 days with no more than 1 exception per 20 drafts.	X	X		X

Measurable Standards Aligning USDA and FSA Strategic Goals by Element

Team Leadership

Position	Measurable Standards	Time	Quality	Quantity	Cost-Effectiveness
Management analyst	**USDA Goal 2, Objective 2.2** **FSA Goal 1, Objective 1.1**				
	Assumes team leader role in supervisor's absence; logs in the work and assigns it to a qualified staff member within 1 hour of receipt; answers questions for people.	X	X		
	Assures assigned work is progressing on schedule and balanced with respect to staff expertise and workload as judged by supervisor and staff feedback.	X	X	X	X
	Error free, good relationships with customers as measured by fewer than 1 complaint o supervisor per 6 months.		X		
Computer Specialist	**USDA Management Initiative: Expand Electronic Gov't** **FSA C-CM , Objective 4**				
	Provides technical leadership to install OMB and OCIO mandates into routine software development practices and processes:				
	• Oversees projects so they meet milestone and target dates and follow applicable SDLC standards and guidelines	X	X		
	• Ensures investments achieve at least 90% of cost and schedule goals using EVMs statistics from the USDA EVM positor.	X			X

Measurable Standards Aligning USDA and FSA Strategic Goals by Element

Program Management

Position	Measurable Standards	Time	Quality	Quantity	Cost-Effectiveness
Field SPR Loan Specialist	**USDA Goal 2** **FSA Goal 1, Objective 1.2**				
	Ensures that applications for benefits (Farm Program Loans) are accurately processed within required timeframes with no more than 1 exception in 20 applications.	X	X		
	Ensures reviews are conducted and accurate reports are filed and submitted within established timeframes with no more than 1 exception in 20 reviews/reports.	X	X		
Field District Director	**USDA Goal 2,** **FSA Goal 1, Objective 1.1, 1.2, 1.3**				
	Monitors all aspects of program(s) for quality, effectiveness, and consistency.				
	• Program plans and guidance are responsive to objectives and requirements of the agency,		X		
	• policy instructions are clear, accurate and issued to program users immediately following any changes; no more than 1 exception in 10.		X		
	• Staff is fully trained in the program his or her program area within established timeframes	X	X		
	• Reports are filed and submitted within established timeframes and require no revision. No more than 1 exception per 20 reports.	X	X		X

Measurable Standards Aligning USDA and FSA Strategic Goals by Element

Special Projects

Position	Measurable Standards	Time	Quality	Quantity	Cost-Effectiveness
HQ Loan Specialist	USDA Goal 2, Objective 2.2 FSA Goal 1, Objective 1.1				
	Provides oversight and leadership to the detailees of the Consent Decree Action Team (CDAT) for XXX lawsuit.				
	• Works closely with contractors, OIG, OGC, FL Chiefs, DAFO and Finance Office to assure that all aspects of the Consent Decree process meet standards as judged by parties to the decree (customers).		X		
	• Assures that CDAT completes claim reviews, implementation of priority cases and other requirements within the established timeframes of the Consent Decree.	X			X
	• Performs CDAT functions no less than 40% of job time.			X	
District Director	**USDA Management Initiative: Improve Financial Mgt.** **FSA C-CM, Objective 3**				
	Improve timeliness, accuracy and reliability of CCC and FSA financial information particularly:				
	• New CCC-2 budget system is operational by 4/15/06 for FY 2007 mid-session review	X			
	• Obtain an acceptable rating on business case for BPMS IT investment by 8/31/06	X	X		

Measurable Standards Aligning USDA and FSA Strategic Goals by Element

Research and Analysis

Position	**Measurable Standards**	**Time**	**Quality**	**Quantity**	**Cost-Effectiveness**
Field Administrative Officer	**USDA Goal 2, Objective 2.2** **FSA Goal 1, Objective 1.1**				
	When researching issues, considers all applicable policies, regulations or laws in order to make recommendations or decisions within the timeframe requested with no more than 1 exception per 10 issues.	X	X		
	Writes State temporary directive notices in clear, concise and understandable language as judged by the customer based a quarterly survey; completed within established timeframes with no more than 1 exception per 20 directives.		X		X
	Assembles and indexes work papers to expedite analysis and develop summaries that require no more than 2 revisions by supervisor.		X		X

Measurable Standards Aligning USDA and FSA Strategic Goals by Element

Customer Service

Position	Measurable Standards	Time	Quality	Quantity	Cost-Effectiveness
Management Analyst	**USDA Goal 2, Objective 2.2** **FSA Goal 1, Objective 1.1**				
	Requests for information or technical assistance are responded to within 1 day of request with expected action and deadline included in response. Requests that cannot be resolved timely are forwarded to supervisor for action.	X	X		
	Concerns or questions from EDS sites about recently issued handbooks are researched and resolved within 1 business day.	X			
	Customers and coworkers are treated fairly and respectfully as measured by quarterly customer survey. All conflict with customers and coworkers are reported to supervisor by the end of that business day.	X	X		
Secretary	**USDA Goal 2, Objective 2.3** **FSA Goal 1, Objective 1.3**				
	Greets visitors and callers courteously and prompt manner within 3 minutes of the time they enter the office with no more than 3 exceptions during a performance year; performance established by customer feedback on quarterly survey.	X	X		
	Takes messages and forwards calls to the responsible specialist immediately with no more than 5 exceptions per 6 months.	X	X		
	Responds to customer questions accurately, according to procedures with no more than 2 valid complaints. Responds within 24 hours with no more than 1 exception per 10 requests.	X	X		
	Maintains supplies, answers telephones, assists with special projects, and completes activity reports routinely as part of job with no more than 3 complaints from office staff per 6 months.		X		

Measurable Standards Aligning USDA and FSA Strategic Goals by Element

Individual Contributions to the Team

Position	Measurable Standards	Time	Quality	Quantity	Cost-Effectiveness
Field Program Specialist	**USDA Goal 2, Objective 2.3** **FSA Goal 1, Objective 1.2**				
	Cooperates with coworkers and customers in meeting commitments and accomplishing assigned work on time; passes on information that facilitates high quality, effectiveness and timeliness for coworkers' execution of duties as judged by coworker feedback.	X	X		
	Raises concerns to supervisor and coworkers in a constructive manner and offers potential solutions with no more than 1 complaint from coworkers per 6 months.		X		

Supervision

Cross Cutting Mgt. Obj. 2

(Mandatory for all supervisors and managers)

Position	Measurable Standards	Time	Quality	Quantity	Cost-Effectiveness
Branch Chief	**USDA Goal 2, Objective 2.2** **FSA Goal 2, Objective 2.1**				
	Prioritizes work of staff to deal with workload shifts and to ensure mission critical work is accomplished on time and to the quality standard established with no more than 1 exception in 20 assignments as judged by customers and employees.	X	X		
	When employee performance does not meet expectations, provides specific feedback and coaches staff member to improved performance. No more than 1 employee-reported exception per year.	X	X		X

Measurable Standards Aligning USDA and FSA Strategic Goals by Element

Equal Opportunity/Civil Rights

(FSA Cross-Cutting Mgt. Obj. Obj. 1)

(Mandatory for all supervisors and managers; optional for nonsupervisors)

Position	Measurable Standards	Time	Quality	Quantity	Cost-Effectiveness
HQ Loan Specialist	**USDA Management Initiatives: Improving Human Resource Management** **FSA C-CM, Objective 1**				
	Brings discriminatory issues or actions to the attention of the supervisor of other appropriate official no later than 24 hours after known occurrence.	X			
	Ensures inaccurate/outdated civil rights guidance within FLP and FSA directives is brought to the attention of FLP managers as soon as they are identified.	X	X		
Branch Chief	**USDA Management Initiatives: Improving Human Resource Management** **FSA C-CM, Objective 1**				
	Responds within 24 hours of becoming aware of issues/actions/allegations and responds according to agency procedures; no more than 1 staff reported exception per quarter.	X	X		
	Models appropriate behavior by treating employees, peers, supervisors and customers with respect, fairness and politeness with no more than 1 complaint per quarter.		X		
District Director	**USDA Management Initiatives: Improving Human Resource Management** **FSA C-CM, Objective 1**				
	Assures that all employees receive Civil Rights, EEO and Sexual Harassment training within established timeframes as measured by training documentation.	X			
	Reviews the USDA's civil rights policy with employees at least 2 times a year;	X			
	Monitors by 'walking around' to ensure that employees are treating each other and customers in accordance with the civil rights policy; documents observed examples of both positive and negative civil rights treatment.		X		

Worksheet to Determine Measurable Standards

<table>
<tr><td>Employee:</td><td>Position:</td><td colspan="5">Location:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="7">Element:</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Key Task or Work Output</td><td rowspan="2">At a Fully Successful level, what results would I expect?
What results would others expect?</td><td colspan="4">How will I (or others) know that the results have been met? What are the “thresholds” at the Fully Successful level?</td><td rowspan="2">How will I monitor these results? (Consider tracking systems already in place)?
Whom do I need to consult (customers? Other supervisors? Coworkers?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Timeliness</td><td>Quality</td><td>Quantity</td><td>Cost-effectiveness</td></tr>
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Measurable Standards for FSA Field Office Positions

Civil Rights: Nonsupervisors

Attends 2-4 optional EEO/AA/Diversity information sessions provided/scheduled by supervisor.

Assists supervisor or responsible individual with planning, preparing for, or presenting EEO/AA/Diversity information sessions 2-4 times per year.

Consistently treats coworkers with respect, fairness, and politeness including socially disadvantaged (SDA), females, and persons with disabilities with no more than 1-2 complaints. Relates well to people from various backgrounds and situations with no more than 1-2 complaints.

Consistently treats customers/producers with respect, fairness, and politeness including SDA, females, and persons with disabilities with no more than 1-2 complaints.

Brings discriminatory issues or actions to the attention of the supervisor or other appropriate official as soon as possible but no later than 24 hours after occurrence.

Ensures that the civil rights/EO actions and correspondence file is up-to-date and complete throughout the year, within the timeframes established by management, with only 1-3 exceptions.

Applies the same eligibility criteria to applicants including SDA, females, and persons with disabilities to increase participation by these groups with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Ensures that customers are provided with the information required; that is, appeal rights, program information, deadlines, etc., including SDA, females, and persons with disabilities within established timeframes with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Participates in available training or other EEO/AA/Diversity related activities 2-4 times a year.

Completes required civil rights/EEO/Sexual Harassment training within established timeframes with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Reviews and meets requirements established in Notice AO-1351 with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

***Supervisors must include established timeframes, dates, numbers, and percentages where required.**

Measurable Standards for FSA Field Office Positions (continued)

Civil Rights: Supervisors

Ensures that 95-99 percent of employees have measurable civil rights performance elements in their annual performance plans within established timeframes.

Provides Civil Rights/EEO/Sexual Harassment/Diversity information (USDA material) to employees through information sessions, staff meetings, etc. 2-4 times a year.

Ensures that employees receive required Civil Rights, EEO, and Sexual Harassment training within established timeframes with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Responds to issues/actions/allegations according to agency procedures and within established timeframes with only 1-3 approved exceptions.

Takes action to reduce the number of valid employee complaints by actions such as increasing information provided for interpersonal skills training to employees, etc. 2-4 times annually.

Reviews the USDA's civil rights policy with employees 2-4 times a year to ensure that customers and employees are treated in accordance with the policy

Increases awareness of all FSA programs with all SDA groups of the following activities: provides information to SDA high schools, establishes partnerships with SDA institutions and community-based groups, provides articles and success stories to newsletters and newspapers, uses COC and/or SDA advisor to identify all SDA organizations, places informational posters in public facilities and churches or businesses serving socially-disadvantages members by holding 1-3 outreach meetings per year with SDA groups.

Develops an election outreach plan to increase the number of SDA producers on the COC within established timeframe that includes actively soliciting and accepting nominations from producers and groups representing SDA producers and holds 1-3 informational meetings in advance of the nomination period.

Is available to meet with SDA groups to fully explain COC nomination and election procedures 90-95% of the time and provides all election information to all SDA groups in the county annually and timely with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Increases the number of SDA candidates by 1-3% for COC based on election outreach plan.

Measurable Standards for FSA Field Office Positions (continued)

Civil Rights: Supervisors (continued)

Encourages employees to attend training to increase interpersonal skills; such as cross-cultural communication, negotiation, dispute resolution, problem solving, active listening, etc. by including the recommended training on a timely established IDP followed by discussion and by following up with employees regarding the status of training 2-4 times during the year.

Provides pro-active assistance to employees to help with problem solving and resolving conflicts. Results based on employee feedback, surveys, random oral surveys from second level supervisor, and providing employee skills training in related topics by providing information at 1-3 staff meetings.

Meets USDA-established civil rights/EEO goals for recruitment, selection, promotion, training, awards, and other personnel activities with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Models appropriate behavior by treating employees, peers, supervisors, and customers with respect, fairness, and politeness with no more than 1-2 complaints.

Ensures requirements of Notice AO-1351 are met with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Ensures that complete application materials are provided to all customers or potential customers of FSA, ensuring that all SDA and persons with disabilities receive complete applications within established timeframes with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Ensures that all SDA and persons with disabilities are provided guidance and instructions for completing applications for loans or farm program benefits within established timeframes with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

***Supervisors must include established timeframes, dates, numbers, and percentages where required.**

Measurable Standards for FSA Field Office Positions (continued)

Communication: All

*(S) identifies objectives as supervisor only.

Communicates clearly with producers and shares accurate information with only 3-5 exceptions.

Responds to general program questions within 24 hours with only 4-6 exceptions. Elevates more complex questions to supervisor, team leader, or other individual responsible within 2 hours of inquiry.

Schedules staff meetings on a regular basis (at least monthly and after major program conferences and meetings or more often if required by management). (S)

Prepares written documents that are clear, concise, and understandable as well as following prescribed procedures within established timeframes with only 1-3 exceptions.

Responds in writing (when appropriate) to customer inquiries within established timeframes with only 1-3 exceptions.

Regularly shares program information the employee is responsible for with co-workers to increase staff awareness of all program areas within timeframes established by management (cross-training, collaboration, reports at staff meetings, etc.) with only 1-3 exceptions.

Resolves disputes and problems with others through use of problem solving, conflict resolution, and negotiation with no more than 1-2 exceptions. Must respond to disputes and problems within 24 hours of becoming aware.

***Supervisors must include established timeframes, dates, numbers, and percentages where required.**

Measurable Standards for FSA Field Office Positions (continued)

Customer Service: All

Responds to customer questions accurately and according to procedures with only 2-4 valid complaints. Responds by at least acknowledging receipt of an inquiry as soon as possible, but within 24 hours with only 4-6 exceptions.

Provides internal training that is accurate and given within established timeframes 85-95 percent of the time.

Completes assigned program training within established timeframes 85-95 percent of the time.

Ensures external customers are acknowledged within 3 minutes of the time they enter the office with only 6-10 exceptions.

Uses a customer transaction checklist to ensure all required information is obtained and applications are completed and accurate with only 3-5 exceptions.

Provides program benefit information to producers and other customers; such as, newsletters, counter information, producer meetings, producer organizations, newspaper articles, and radio announcements within established timeframes with only 1-3 exceptions.

Ensures that customer applications are accurate and processed within established timeframes with only 1-3 exceptions.

Ensures that payments are processed within timeframes with only 1-3 exceptions.

Responds to other agencies (NRCS, RMS, Conservation Districts, Extension Services, etc.) regarding shared programs within established timeframes with only 1-5 exceptions.

Receives only 4-6 valid customer complaints.

***Supervisors must include established timeframes, dates, numbers, and percentages where required.**

Measurable Standards for FSA Field Office Positions (continued)

Execution of Duties: Nonsupervisors

Ensures that payment amounts are accurate, that necessary supporting documents are up to date and on file, and that applications are complete with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Note: This standard is required for Farm Program staff.

Prepares reports required with duties that are accurate and complete within established timeframes with only 1-3 exceptions.

Achieves use of EFT for 85-95 percent of loan obligations.

Achieves use of EFT for 90-98 percent of payments.

Deposits and processes payments within 24 hours of receipt, in accordance with FSA policy with only 1-3 exceptions.

Achieves or demonstrates progress toward ensuring that no late payment interest accrues with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Achieves or demonstrates progress towards working to provide information about program benefits to producers to ensure that they can make informed decisions; by publishing 6-10 newsletters, providing 1-3 handouts as counter information, attending 1-3 producer meetings, meeting with producer organizations 1-3 times, etc.

Achieves or makes progress toward ensuring payment amounts are accurate with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Ensures applications are completed accurately to minimize inaccurate payments with only 3-5 exceptions.

Completes all actions required on an application within established timeframes with only 1-3 exceptions.

Achieves or makes progress toward ensuring farm loan transactions or other assigned work is accurate and complete with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Loads software within 2 workdays of receipt with only 3-5 exceptions.

Measurable Standards for FSA Field Office Positions (continued)

Execution of Duties: Nonsupervisors (continued)

Achieves or makes progress toward delinquency rates within the States established goals with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Ensures that operations occur in an efficient manner to support the program areas; like, printing and distributing materials, creating regulations and guidance, etc., with only 1-3 exceptions.

Meets Federal contracting regulations with respect to processing, follow through, and life span with only 1-3 exceptions.

Processes requests in a timely manner with only 1-3 complaints.

Files notices and amendments within two workdays of posted receipt with only 3-5 exceptions.

***Supervisors must include established timeframes, dates, numbers, and percentages where required.**

Measurable Standards for FSA Field Office Positions (continued)

Individual Contributions to the Team: All Except Team Leaders and Supervisors

Demonstrates collaborative efforts between farm programs and farm loan programs by regularly sharing information and providing other support. Attends and participates in joint staff meetings with only 1-2 exceptions (unless excused because of scheduled leave).

Regularly cooperates with coworkers and others in meeting commitments and accomplishing assigned work on time; such as, sharing information freely with only 1-3 exceptions.

Responds constructively to feedback within 24 hours, seeking ways to improve with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Consistently raises concerns in constructive manner and offers potential solutions with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Fosters productive and cooperative working relationships by showing understanding, courtesy, tact, and politeness to others with no more than 4-6 valid complaints.

Updates records that affect other programs in the office within timeframes established by management with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

***Supervisors must include established timeframes, dates, numbers, and percentages where required.**

Measurable Standards for FSA Field Office Positions (continued)

Performance Alignment: FSA State and County Office Supervisors

Communicate how organizational goals are linked and cascaded to individual and work group performance, and how the accomplishments support employees' organizational goals within their organizations, through:

- staff meetings
- individual or team meetings
- electronic and internal correspondence

Ensure that all employees review the Agency's current Strategic Plan Framework or organizational goals at http://bpms.wdc.usda.gov/bpms.htm

Develop performance plans that include a critical element with standards that identify clear and measurable (quality, quantity, cost, and/or timely) tasks and results that are aligned to organizational goals for each individual.

***Note**: When cascading goals, be sure to consider the level of responsibility of the position. For example, do not use the same language for a program technician (PT) that would be used for District Director (DD). Standards must be realistic and attainable.*

Measurable Standards for FSA Field Office Positions (continued)

Program Management: Supervisors

Ensures that payment amounts are accurate, that necessary supporting documents are up to date and on file, and that applications are complete with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Note: This standard is required for Farm Program staff.

Processes loans within the States established goals with only 1-3 exceptions.

Achieves or demonstrates progress on a monthly basis toward ensuring that no late payment interest accrues with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Ensures that reviews are conducted and reports are filed and submitted within established timeframes with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Achieves or makes progress on a monthly basis toward delinquency rates within the States established goals with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Ensures that applications for benefits are processed within required timeframes with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Ensures that producer payments are made within required timeframes with no more than 3-4 exceptions.

Ensures that staff is fully trained in the program areas for which each employee is responsible within at least 5 days of being assigned the program or within at least 3 days of learning of changes in the program.

Ensures that compliance checks are made within established timeframes.

***Supervisors must include established timeframes, dates, numbers, and percentages where required.**

Measurable Standards for FSA Field Office Positions (continued)

Research and Analysis: All

Reviews and analyzes temporary directive notices and handbook procedure on a daily basis 90-98 percent of the time.

Takes actions required by temporary directive notices or handbook procedure within the timeframes required with only 2-4 exceptions.

Asks questions for clarification and makes suggestions for implementation within the timeframes established by management with no more than 2-4 exceptions.

Writes State temporary directive notices required by the supervisor that are clear, concise, and understandable within established timeframes 90-98 percent of the time. [State Office Only]

Conducts research and gathers data in response to legal issues and other assignments that are complete, accurate, and relevant within established timeframes with only 1-3 exceptions.

Assembles, indexes, and organizes work papers to expedite analysis and develop quality summaries and report segments with only 1-3 revisions by supervisor 85-95 percent of the time.

Analyzes data to identify weaknesses, patterns, and trends that are communicated to supervisor and other required staff within established timeframes with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Prepares case files that are complete and accurate within established timeframes for use in legal or administrative forums with only 1-3 exceptions.

Prepares case files for program appeals that are complete and accurate within established timeframes with only 1-3 exceptions.

***Supervisors must include established timeframes, dates, numbers, and percentages where required.**

Measurable Standards for FSA Field Office Positions (continued)

Resource Management: All

Manages within the established budget for program, function, or work assigned; notifies appropriate individual of potential budget shortfalls at least 30 calendar days in advance with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Ensures that budget object codes are correctly entered with only 1-3 exceptions.

Ensures that travel, training, and other administrative forms are properly completed, timely, and followed-up to ensure proper processing with only 1-3 exceptions.

Plans resource needs accurately with only 1-3 exceptions.

Ensures bills are paid by established deadlines to avoid late payment interest with only 1-2 exceptions.

Plans projects or other assignments, monitors, and completes projects or assignments within schedule and quality goals 90-98 percent of the time.

***Supervisors must include established timeframes, dates, numbers, and percentages where required.**

Measurable Standards for FSA Field Office Positions (continued)

Supervision: Supervisors

Schedules staff meetings at least monthly and after major program conferences or meetings or more frequently if required by management with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Prioritizes work of staff to deal with workload shifts and to ensure that mission-critical work is accomplished with 90-98 percent accuracy.

Ensures that all new employees receive training on operational and procedural requirements within timeframes required by management with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Ensures that all employees are assessed and training needs are identified, communicated to employees, and planned on an annual basis with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Ensures that all employees receive required training within established timeframes with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Ensures issues and problems are identified, documented, and dealt with in a timely manner (immediately for minor issues, usually within 1 week for others, or within agency established timeframes as applicable) 85-95 percent of the time.

Ensures that all individual performance plans are linked to SED goals and that the links are explained to employees by the required deadline with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Conducts all requirements of the performance management cycle including encouraging 2 way discussions of planning, reviews, evaluations, and career development, setting goals and conducting reviews and evaluations within established timeframes, encouraging and implementing on-going feedback throughout the year, 95-99 percent of the time.

Ensures fair treatment of staff by dealing with issues such as absenteeism, tardiness, and other chronic problems within 1 week of identification of problem with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

Prepares required reports that are accurate, according to stated requirements, and within established timeframes with only 1-3 exceptions.

Ensures that all personnel responsibilities (recruitment, staffing, promotion, training, evaluation, and discipline) are conducted fairly, meet established procedures, and within established timeframes with no more than 1-2 exceptions.

*** Supervisors must include established timeframes, dates, numbers, and percentages where required.**

Measurable Standards for FSA Field Office Positions (continued)

Team Leadership: All

Provides leadership or oversees subordinate or co-workers' work and achieves desired results 85-95 percent of the time.

Plans projects and monitors or reviews work within schedule and quality goals for assigned program or functional work 85-95 percent of the time.

Demonstrates collaborative efforts between farm programs and farm loan programs by ensuring team regularly shares information and provides other support on a daily basis with no more than 5-7 exceptions. Joint staff meetings will be held on a regular basis as established by management with no more than 1-2 exceptions, frequency of the meetings must be established in writing.

Informs coworkers and backup employee of work in progress or issues before taking leave 85-95 percent of the time.

***Supervisors must include established timeframes, dates, numbers, and percentages where required.**

Give, Get, Merge Communication Model Job Aid

Give, Get, Merge is a communication model that incorporates skills to optimize communication with your employees.

- Give your perspective in a way that the employee can understand and relate to. Show your commitment to the communication process, not to your position of power over the employee.
- Get the employee's perspective in a way that will build his or her involvement in the process. Make sure the employee knows that he or she is not merely a passive observer but, instead, an active participant in evaluation and planning.
- Merge the perspectives and strive to come to agreement to increase the likelihood of a high level of performance and success. Blend your view and your employee's view to create as clear a consensus as possible. Finish your discussion so that both of you are confident in the conclusions you've reached together.

GIVE Your Perspective

Give your perspective to communicate a clear and objective message about performance expectations/behavior—both expected and actual.

What to Do	How to Do It
1. Describe **expected** performance	Be concise. Express yourself completely and directly, without excessive wordiness.
2. Describe **actual** performance or behavior	Be objective. Keep your perspective free of emotions, personal prejudice, or judgments.
3. Describe why the performance or behavior is important	Be specific. Focus your statements on particular, distinctive actions or accomplishments.

Give, Get, Merge Communication Model Job Aid (continued)

GET Employee's Perspective

Get the employee's perspective to involve him or her in the performance management process and strengthen his or her buy-in and commitment.

What to Do	How to Do It
Attend Attending demonstrates to the speaker that you are paying attention and listening to what he/she is saying.	Give your full physical and mental attention to the employee: • Maintain eye contact. • Keep an alert but relaxed posture. • Use appropriate facial expressions. • Nod your head. • Say "I see …" or "Uh-huh …" to let people know they have your attention. • Be sensitive to cultural differences that may exist in a diverse workforce. (Be aware, for instance, that in some cultures maintaining direct eye contact can be offensive.)
Encourage Encouraging can stimulate or spur other people to offer you more information, insight, or ideas. It conveys to them that you are interested in what they have to say.	Draw the employee out to involve him or her in the discussion: • Do not interrupt • Provide cues that you are engaged; e.g., nod your head or respond to comments with "I see" or "Right" • Use phrases such as "Tell me more" to elicit further elaboration of ideas and concerns.
Paraphrase Paraphrasing is the key skill to make certain that you have understood the other's message. Paraphrasing is summarizing in your own words the gist of what someone has said. It: • Lets the person know that you are listening • Encourages the person to expand on what he/she is saying • Helps you confirm what the person is saying before you react.	• Mentally summarize the key points of what the person is saying. • Reflect the gist of what the person has said in your own words. Begin with a phrase such as: – "What I hear you saying is … " – "In other words, you're saying …" – "You're saying …." **Criteria for Effective Paraphrasing** • Interchangeable (that is, you don't take away from or add to what the person has said) • Brief • In your own words • Free from judgment (that is, you're not agreeing or disagreeing with what the person has said; you're simply acknowledging that you understand what he/she meant)

Give, Get, Merge Communication Model Job Aid (continued)

GET Employee's Perspective (continued)

What to Do	How to Do It
Ask questions Sometimes you don't have enough information to really understand what the person has said or to understand it from his/her point of view. Or you may simply need to elicit more information about a situation. The best way to do this is to ask questions.	**Closed Questions** • Are used to elicit a "yes" or "no" or other limited response—a finite amount of information; provide only the information you ask for (assuming you know what questions to ask). • Typically begin with "have," "is," "can," and "do." Examples include: – "Is 2 days enough time?" – "Can Pat handle the job given her skill level?" – "Does this computer error occur often?" • Are used to elicit quick facts and stimulate closure; most useful for confirming understanding or agreement. For example, "Did I understand you correctly when you said that…?" **Open-Ended Questions** • Can yield a great deal of information; are used for gathering information, understanding a problem or concern, drawing out, solving problems. • Often begin with "how," "what," "why," "when," "where," or phrases such as "Tell me about …." Examples include: – "How do you think we should proceed?" – "Tell me about …." • Encourage participation in the communication process or participation at a deeper level.
Listen for content	Reflect back what you heard, in your own words, to ensure that you understand what the employee has said.
Listen for feelings	Pay attention to more than just the words the employee uses: • Observe the employee's nonverbal language (body language, facial expressions) • Listen to what the employee is saying and how he or she is saying it (tone, volume, pacing) • Reflect back the feelings.

Give, Get, Merge Communication Model Job Aid (continued)

MERGE Perspectives	
Merge perspectives to achieve agreement and alignment on issues related to performance—what performance is expected, what actual performance is, etc.	
What to Do	**How to Do It**
1. Identify goals	Keep in mind the desired outcome of the discussion with the employee: • Successful completion of a specific job, task, or behavior, • Support of your professional relationship with the employee, or • A combination of both.
2. Find common ground	Look for and build on similarities in interests, summarizing areas of agreement.
3. Determine specific differences	Identify where you and the employee differ.
4. Explore alternatives	Use a merge strategy—such as integrate, compromise, or accommodate—that will move you and the employee toward the goal.

Depending on your goals for the performance discussion, you will use one of the following five ***strategies for merging perspectives***.

Strategy	Outcome	When to Use
Integrate	Fully incorporates the perspectives of both you and the employee	• You want to create a solution because you both have concerns that are too important to be compromised. • You need to pull together various insights on how to deal with a problem. • You want to increase the level of commitment from the employee. • You need to work through contentious feelings that have been interfering with your relationship with the employee.

Give, Get, Merge Communication Model Job Aid (continued)

Strategy	Outcome	When to Use
Compromise	Meets some, but not all, concerns/ needs of both you and the employee	• The goals you and the employee have set are moderately important, but not worth the effort or potential disruption of fighting it out. • You want to achieve temporary settlements to complex issues. • You need to arrive at an expedient solution under time pressure.
Accommodate	Fully supports the employee's concerns/needs, without meeting your concerns/ needs	• You lack information regarding a situation. It is counterproductive to maintain an uninformed position, so the best resolution may be to accept the employee's views as the blueprint for agreement. • The issue is more important to the employee than to you. Yielding to the employee's position is a goodwill gesture that can help maintain a cooperative relationship. • You and the employee have conflicting viewpoints on especially controversial issues. You may decide that avoiding disruption is more important than forcing a resolution with which neither of you is happy.
Avoid	Neither your nor the employee's concerns/needs can be addressed; decision is postponed	• The dividing issue is trivial. • The potential damage of confronting a conflict outweighs the benefits of its resolution. • You or the employee needs to cool down (to reduce tensions and to regain perspective and composure). • You believe that others could resolve the conflict more effectively.
Impose	Fully meets your concerns, without considering or incorporating the employee's concerns/needs	• You must resolve important issues that require the implementation of unpopular courses of action. • You know you are right and the issues at stake are vital to the organization's welfare. • There are time constraints and you must set deadlines for the completion of work.

Tips for Managing in a Virtual Workplace

Consider individual work styles and needs.

Employees who work well independently, take initiative, have a strong work ethic, and communicate well may be more productive and successful working offsite than those who don't share those characteristics. Consider that some offsite employees may need more structure, guidance, and follow up to keep them focused and productive.

Build trust and rapport.

Managing employees offsite can be difficult because employees don't have change to build trust and rapport with the supervisor and other members of the team. Employees can feel isolated and lose their sense of purpose and focus. Provide as many opportunities as you can to help build a sense of partnership or team:

- Spend time initially (e.g., during the planning phase) with the employee or the team in person. This is especially important with new employees to help familiarize them with the work group. It also helps a virtual team to establish a working relationship.

- Allow for informal socializing (the small talk that often happens in the lunchroom or in the hallway) during electronic meetings.

- Give feedback often, especially positive feedback, to help offsite employees feel connected. Reiterate the goals that the work unit is trying to achieve and how their work contributes to those goals.

- Talk to your offsite employees often – ask how things are going, solicit their opinions and suggestions, and ask what support they need from you to be more effective. As you would in the office, keep "an open door" policy and let them know you are available.

- Encourage offsite team members to communicate with each other frequently.

- Share and celebrate the employee's or teams' successes.

Identify the most appropriate communication methods.

Use a variety of techniques to communicate and share information with virtual employees – email, telephone, teleconferencing, video conferencing, webcasts, shared electronic white boards, virtual meeting rooms, chat rooms, groupware (e.g., Lotus Notes). Make sure your employees are comfortable using the technology.

Tips for Managing in a Virtual Workplace (continued)

Set ground rules for communication.

Frequent and regular communication is critical when managing virtual employees.

- In addition to ongoing communications, establish regular times for one-on-one interaction with your employee or for group interaction if you manage a virtual team. Consider how often, when, and how it makes sense to have these check-ins (e.g., phone call every Monday morning or Friday afternoon? Once a month teleconferences? Daily email status reports?). Consider sending your employee or team a meeting schedule with any ground rules clearly defined.

- Consider how you want information and communications to be shared to ensure that everyone feels included and employees are kept "in the loop." What information needs to be communicated and to whom to make sure everyone is on the same page (e.g., should everyone on the team be copied on all emails)? What communications do you want employees to copy you on (e.g., interactions with customers, other stakeholders)? How quickly do you expect employees to respond to emails or voicemails from you and others on the team?

- Make sure employees know how to reach you and others on the team.

Use good meeting management skills.

With any meeting, it's important to have an agenda outlining the meeting purpose, topics, how much time you plan to spend on these topics, anticipated outcomes (e.g., decisions, action items), and so on. Meeting planning becomes even more critical when holding it virtually to ensure you are making good of everyone's time (even if the meeting just involves you and one offsite employee).

- Send an agenda out ahead of time.
- Tell participants how they should prepare for the meeting.
- Encourage everyone's participation in the meeting. Consider having employees contribute specific information to the meeting to keep them involved.
- Periodically summarize during the meeting to ensure everyone's "on the same page."
- Get agreements on key decisions and action steps before closing the meeting.

Ensure employees have access to the information they need.

Determine what information offsite employees may need and how they can access it. Consider putting forms, reports, and other resources and tools in a central online location for easy access.

Documenting Performance Job Aid

Documentation Guidelines
You are responsible for maintaining documentation related to your employees' performance. It is in an employee's best interest to make sure you remember his or her good performance as well as that which needs improvement. Keep the following guidelines in mind when you are documenting an employee's performance. • Include complete identification of the situation, circumstances, or results of the performance. • Use brief, specific, and detailed statements that support the facts. • Include information on the impact of the performance. • Include information that illustrates performance in relation to expectations. • Be objective. Do not include biases or judgments. • Include only data that reflect performance and results. • Keep the documentation confidential by keeping official documents locked in file cabinets and not leaving your notes in open view. • Maintain the same documentation system for all employees. • Establish folders to hold work samples and observation notes. Set up one folder for each employee. Keep a copy of the employee's performance elements and standards in the folder to remind yourself to collect information about all of them.

Handling Emotional Reactions Job Aid

Reaction and Description	Strategies for Handling . . .
Anger. Angry behavior can be very complex. Behavior may range intermittently from total silence and withdrawal to harassing and negative comments or questions. Angry employees tend to be angry "at the whole world" and are not necessarily angry with you.	• Do not become defensive or invite criticism. • Use silence. Silence gives an angry person nothing to push back against. • Sidestep or ignore. Change the topic and refocus the discussion on the underlying problem or issue. • Refuse to be punished. Draw a boundary by asking the person what he or she wants from you. • Use your empathetic listening skills. Actually listen as a way to recognize and defuse anger.
Bullying. People who use bullying behavior need to zero in on a defenseless target. Bullying behavior manifests itself in verbal attacks; or in using threats, demands, or other attempts to intimidate and push others around.	• Draw boundaries. Let the person know what behavior you will and will not tolerate (e.g., "I will be happy to talk about the situation, but I will not continue the conversation if you threaten me in any way"). • Create a negative consequence that outweighs whatever benefit the person is getting from his/her current behavior. • Explicitly identify the bullying behavior and invite the person to do something more constructive (e.g., "Your repeated verbal attacks aren't getting us any closer to an agreement. I suggest that we …").
Complaining. Complaining employees are not problem solvers, but problem magnifiers. They find fault, gripe, and share an endless list of things they do not like. They use words like "never" and "always" frequently in their complaints.	• Ask for ideas to cope with the complaint. This forces the employee into a problem-solving mode. • Encourage a search for the other side of things (e.g., "You've told me how terrible things are in Department X. However, you are a fair person. Think of one positive thing about it"). • Switch to more positive ground early on (e.g., "Yes, there may be a problem with Department X, and the reason we're here is to find some answers. How can we accomplish this?").

Handling Emotional Reactions Job Aid (continued)

Reaction and Description	Strategies for Handling . . .
Avoiding. Avoiding behaviors include emotional withdrawing, hiding out, procrastinating, or refusing to interact. Employees who are avoiding are often unresponsive and not willing to listen, saying things like, "We don't have anything to talk about," and, "That's not my problem."	• Identify their concerns or fears and help them feel safer (e.g., "Would you be more comfortable if we met in your office?"). • Actively listen so they feel understood. • Help them create safe conditions by asking them what they need (e.g., "What do you need to be willing to stay here and talk this out?").
Crying. When confronted with an employee who is crying, acknowledge the feelings he or she might be having. This will diffuse a lot of the emotion. However, if the crying continues, the employee is trying to find someone or something to blame and wants you to take responsibility.	• Give permission. • Give time and space, but don't end the conversation. • Proceed gradually.

Tips for Managing Your Own Emotions
• Be aware of and recognize your signs of anger, annoyance, and frustration. Know your own "hot buttons" and recognize when employee behaviors are likely to trigger them. • Learn how to take time out from a discussion if you need to cool off and get your emotions under control. Develop some techniques for skillfully ending a conversation if you feel yourself getting emotional. • Remind yourself of why it is important to solve the problem, what your goal is, and what the consequences of not solving it might be. • Do not take the employee's behavior personally. The behavior likely is not meant as an attack on or an affront to you. • Reframe what you are experiencing. If you cannot change the way someone is reacting to feedback, then you might need to alter your perception of the experience. Reframing might mean changing a negative assumption about an employee's behavior and transforming the interpretation into a positive one. • Let it go. Talk to a trusted ally and then drop the subject. Minimize the effects that challenging behaviors have on you. • Be reflective about the situation. Spend structured time reflecting about what you did in a difficult situation, why you did it, and what you could do in a similar situation in the future.

Analyzing Performance Problems

Step 1: Define the Performance Problem	
Description	**Questions to Ask Yourself**
Determining the performance discrepancy. Describe the gap between what the employee is doing and what the employee should be doing. You should be able to describe this discrepancy in specific, objective, and measurable terms.	How would you define the performance discrepancy, or gap between expected and actual performance?
Identifying the extent of the problem helps you determine the amount of time and attention you should give to managing the performance problem. Asking yourself some basic questions will help you with this part of the step.	What is the extent of the problem?
Assessing the organizational impact. It is important to be able to tell the employee not only what is wrong, but also why the issue is important to you and the Agency – the impact of poor performance.	What is the organizational impact?
Step 2: Identify the Reasons for the Performance Problem	
Description	**Questions to Ask Yourself**
There are many possible reasons for a performance problem. Investigating possible reasons for the problem is a key step in understanding the person's performance in preparation for resolving the problem. Thinking through the problem systematically will help you identify the most likely causes. 1. Skill/Knowledge – Employees don't know how to perform 2. Environmental Constraints: Something or someone prevents employees from performing 3. Motivation/Attitude: Employees do not want to perform or there are rewards or penalties that discourage them from performing.	1. Is there a knowledge or skill problem? 2. Is there an environmental problem? 3. Is there a motivation or attitude problem?

Analyzing Performance Problems (continued)

Step 3: Identify Solutions for the Problem	
Description	**Questions to Ask Yourself**
Match the solution to the cause of the performance problem. If you don't do this, the "solution" will not address the real problem and bring about the change you want. For example, if the cause of the performance problem is lack of motivation, then sending the employee to a training class may have no impact on the problem. In fact, training is often used as a cure-all. However, while training typically helps resolve performance problems caused by skill and knowledge deficiencies, it may not impact problems caused by environmental or motivational factors.	What are some solutions to address the cause(s) of the problem?

Performance Improvement Discussion Job Aid

The following guidelines will give you tips on what to do before and during a coaching session.

Before the Discussion			
Plan the session	• Conduct your performance analysis. – Define the problem. – Identify the reasons for the problem. – Identify possible solutions. • If you suspect that formal action may be required later, contact your HR Advisor.		
During the Discussion			
Set the climate	• Hold the discussion in a private location. • Establish a relaxed, non-threatening atmosphere. • Give the employee your undivided attention. • Explain the objectives for the discussion and their value to the employee.		
Step 1: Define the problem	**Give** • Specify the problem (i.e., the gap between current and expected performance). • Highlight the impact or consequences of the performance or behavior.	**Get** • The employee's reaction to the problem • Use open-ended questions and listening skills.	**Merge** Reach agreement on the problem.
Step 2: Identify the reasons for the problem	**Get** The employee's ideas about the reasons.	**Give** Communicate your ideas about the possible reasons for the problem.	**Merge** Reach agreement on the reasons for the problem.
Step 3: Identify solutions for the problem	**Give** Communicate your ideas about possible solutions.	**Get** The employee's ideas for solutions	**Merge** • Agree on mutually acceptable solutions. • Agree on what steps the employee will take to improve or change performance and what you need to provide.

Performance Improvement Discussion Job Aid (continued)

During the Discussion, Continued	
Close the discussion	• Summarize what has been discussed and agreed upon. • Give the employee a chance to provide additional input. • Express your commitment to the employee's growth and success. • Check that all of the employee's concerns have been addressed.

NOTE: If you are working with a performance problem, make sure you document the discussion.

Learning Strategies Job Aid

Many "no cost" and "low cost" opportunities for learning exist both in and outside of the employee's daily work environment. By considering a variety of strategies, you and your employee can choose those opportunities that best meet his/her needs.

Tips:

- Consider how the employee learns best. Some individuals prefer reading and reflecting on what they have read. Others prefer more of a "hands-on" experience and interaction with others.

- Consider the learning goal when identifying strategies. For example, if the employee wants to become more comfortable talking in groups, then attending a discussion forum might be a good strategy.

- Make sure to close the loop with the employee following the training or development. For example, talk with employees about what they learned through reading, developmental assignments, and online courses. Have them share what they've learned with other employees in a staff meeting.

Strategy	Description
Coaching	Observing a mentee at work and providing feedback and facilitative problem solving to enhance performance or correct deficiencies; supporting a mentee as he/she learns new tasks.
Self-development	Taking personal responsibility for one's own learning and development through a process of assessment, reflection, and action.
Job aids	Tools that give step-by-step guidance for completing a task (e.g., checklists, decision aids, procedure and policy manuals, work samples, flowcharts).
Special projects	Short-term and/or long-term assignments with a specific learning outcome that lasts from several months to a year; typically in addition to one's current job.
Shadowing assignment	An assignment during which the mentee observes another person in his/her daily routine for a period of time. Gives the mentee a sense of the duties and responsibilities of the job and how the person handles the work and situations that arise.
Rotational assignment	A "detail" to another position or unit to broaden mentee's knowledge of different operations and working environments.
Discussion forum	A group that meets on a regular basis to share ideas, information, and solutions to work-related issues. Provides an opportunity for the mentee to build his/her network. Forums can be face-to-face or online.

Learning Strategies Job Aid (continued)

Strategy	Description
Reading	Reading pertinent books, articles, professional journals and magazines to broaden the mentee's knowledge of relevant issues, trends, challenges, and solutions.
Online learning	Using AGLearn to access free online courses and reference material; using the Internet to research work-related topics, take self-paced courses, access real-time presentations by keynote conference speakers, and access reading materials.
Classroom courses	Work-related training held in a traditional classroom setting at either on-site or off-site locations.
Audiotapes and videotapes	Pre-recorded professional books and courses on a variety of work-related topics.
Informational interviews	Meetings with key people to gain information, as well as their perspective and advice, on areas of interest.

Supervisor's Guide to Conducting the Year-End Performance Review Meeting

Step 1: Open the Meeting, including setting the climate for the meeting

- Reserve a private office or a conference room (with a door).
- Let people know that you will not be available for telephone calls, questions, or conversations during the time of the meeting. Post some type of 'do not disturb' sign.
- Redirect incoming phone calls; turn off any cell phones or pagers during the meeting.
- Remove any physical barriers (e.g., office/computer equipment or stacks of items) that exist between you and the employee.
- Position yourself in relation to the employee so as not to suggest superiority.
- Consider cultural differences regarding:
  - Eye contact
  - Personal proximity
  - Nonverbal behaviors
  - Touch (e.g., pats on the back).
- Establish a positive tone for the discussion by greeting the employee and welcoming him or her to the discussion.
- Review the meeting objectives:
  - Discuss overall performance and achievements
  - Discuss how well results were achieved and behaviors demonstrated in comparison with the expectations set in the employee's performance plan
  - Discuss the rating for each element and the overall Summary Rating
  - Identify developmental opportunities to help ensure that expectations are met.

Step 2: Discuss Accomplishments and Expectations

- Provide an overall statement that describes "how things are going."
- Use the Give, Get, Merge Model in reviewing how the employee's performance compares with the expectations set in his or her performance plan and the resulting rating for each criterion and expectation.

Supervisor's Guide to Conducting the Year-End Performance Review Meeting (continued)

Step 2: Discuss Accomplishments and Expectations (continued)

- Determine those actions that may be necessary to help the employee improve his or her performance:
  - Identify developmental opportunities that will improve the employee's performance or help him or her continue to grow and record them in Section H of the Form
  - Establish an Opportunity to Improve (OTI) with counseling for the employee when warranted.
  - Provide additional counseling for the employee if his or her Summary Rating is Marginal or Unacceptable.

Step 3: Close the Meeting

- Ask the employee if he or she wishes to submit comments to be included.
  - Set a date by which the employee's comments are due.
  - Tentatively schedule a meeting to discuss the comments.
- Summarize the highlights of the meeting.
- Confirm agreements and next steps.
- Express commitment to the employee's development.
- Ensure that all the employee's concerns have been addressed.
  - If necessary, explain the grievance and appeal procedures.

Key Questions for Selecting Awards

Select awards that support organizational goals and objectives by answering the following questions:

- Did the performance represent an individual or a group effort? Many organizations include improved teamwork and collaboration as an internal goal. If a group rather than an individual accomplished something deserving recognition, grant a group award.
- What was the impact of the performance? Did the accomplishment affect an organizational goal or an individual goal or did it fall somewhere in between? Accomplishments with greater impacts may warrant more significant awards.
- What form should the award take? For example, would granting a Time-Off Award enhance an otherwise cash award?
- Is the organization recognizing its top performers? Employees need to know that good performance is valued.
- Does the Agency have limitations on awards? Ensure that the awards you propose meet Agency and regulatory requirements.

In addition to considering the organizational outcomes, consider the employee's perception of the award and ask yourself the following questions.

- What award would the employee appreciate? Most employees appreciate cash, but sometimes they value other forms of awards as much or more. For example, a new staff member with little or no leave may appreciate a Time-Off Award more than a small cash award.
- Should I present the award publicly or privately? Some employees would rather receive no award at all than stand in front of a group of peers for recognition. Learn ahead of time in what setting the employee would feel more comfortable.

Monetary Awards (as of April 20, 2007)

NONMEASURABLE BENEFITS SCALE			
Value of Benefits	**Application**		
	Limited	***Broad***	***General***
	Impacts the public interest, or a specific small work unit including a division or region.	Impacts the public interest, or several regional areas or an entire agency.	Impacts the public interest, or more than one agency, or the entire Department.
Small/Moderate	***$50–$325***	***$325–$650***	***$650–$1,300***
Moderate/Substantial	***$325–$650***	***$650–$1,300***	***$1,300–$3,150***
Substantial/Extended	***$1,000–$2,500***	***$2,500–$5,500***	$5,500–$10,000

MEASURABLE BENEFITS SCALE	
Benefit	**Award**
Up to $10,000	10 percent of the benefits.
$10,001–$100,000	$1,000 for the first $10,000 in benefits, plus 3 percent of benefits over $10,000.
$100,001 or more	$3,700 for the first $100,000 in benefits plus .005 percent of benefits over $100,000. Award amount should not exceed the recipient's annual salary.

TIME OFF SCALE	
VALUE OF THE EMPLOYEE'S CONTRIBUTION	**HOURS TO BE AWARDED**
SMALL/MODERATE—Contributions that helped ease a backlog or completion of a special project that benefited primarily the employee's home office.	1–10 hours
MODERATE/SUBSTANTIAL—Contributions that helped an entire division, region, or other large geographic area.	11–40 hours

Appendix C: Frequently Asked Questions

Do I have to use only the recommended elements and standards?

The Menu of Recommended Elements was created to make the supervisor's job of writing elements easier.

- Use an element "as is" if the definition satisfactorily describes what your employee does
- Modify if the employee's job encompasses some but not all of it, or if there are additional components to the job you want to add.

If an employee's job assignments do not seem to be covered by any of the recommended elements, you are free to write your own.

Are measures and standards the same thing?

A standard is what is to be measured and a measure is how it will be measured.

Example – "**Demonstrates** a basic understanding of the Agency's Safety and Health Program. **Complies with** safety and health rules and regulations that apply to all employees. Ensures all reports of unsafe and unhealthful conditions are reported to supervisor or designated official within **48 hours**."

The whole paragraph is the standard. The bolded parts are the measures. This standard has three measures in it.

In what ways are supervisors' requirements different from employees'?

- Supervisors' performance plans are required to have customer and employee perspectives.
  - Include quality measures of employee and customer perspectives when writing measurable standards in the Planning phase.
  - Periodically invite customer and employee feedback in the Monitoring phase.
  - Give feedback to the reviewing official when he or she asks for input/feedback on the supervisor's performance, relative to his or her measurable standards during the year-end appraisal.
- Supervisors must have Supervisory EEO/Civil Rights and Supervision as two of their critical elements. Each element requires measurable standards with employee and customer perspectives.

How do I ensure that my employee's measurable standards are legally defensible?

The risk of legal challenges can be reduced or minimized by the steps below.

- Use the employee’s job description as the basis for the measurable standards.
- Write the standards in observable, behavioral terms.
- Discuss the meaning of the standards with your employee at the beginning of the performance cycle.
- Keep documentation for each employee and record observable, objective evidence of poor performance and good performance.
- Be sure your reviewing official has approved each employee’s performance plan and your year-end appraisal. The Reviewing Official is usually the supervisor’s supervisor. This person reviews your employees' performance standards as you submitted them, reviews and approves employees' performance plans, and approves year-end ratings before you, as the rating official, discuss them with your employees.
- Audit your evaluations to be sure you are not distinguishing based on any protected category.

What else can I do to enhance my employees’ performance?

Different things motivate different people. An environment with the following characteristics will likely motivate most of your employees.

- Give opportunities for achievement. Tasks or assignments with an outcome are an opportunity to achieve something. Even the most routine job may be “spiced up” with a special project that produces an outcome.

- Give recognition for achievements. This factor is probably the easiest to manage. Give recognition at any time for any type of work. Some ideas to recognize achievement are: positive feedback, awards, comp time, or allowing employees to overhear your comments about their fine work.

- Make challenging assignments. Some people thrive on challenge, whether supported or not. For most, however, a challenging assignment should come with some supervisory support so that the person does not feel “hung out to dry.”

- Provide opportunities to learn and develop. Focus on technical skill development, competency development, increasing experience, or taking a team leadership role.

- Foster teamwork. For some people, working as part of a team is very motivating. The camaraderie, the joint effort, and the creative power of several minds energize them. Task forces, project teams, or just two people working together could satisfy that desire.

- Assign interesting work. This is a “job fit” issue, but a supervisor can inject more interesting aspects to any job. If employees are bored with the routine, perhaps assigning a special project or expanding their authority can make the job more interesting.

- Respect independence. When people manage themselves, they tend to be more motivated than when they feel someone is micro-managing them. Invite an employee to describe how they will complete an assignment instead of telling them how to do it.